



EXCAVATING PILGRIMAGE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO SACRED TRAVEL
AND MOVEMENT IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

EDITED BY
TROELS MYRUP KRISTENSEN AND WIEBKE FRIESE

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Excavating Pilgrimage

This volume sheds new light on the significance and meaning of material culture for the study of pilgrimage in the ancient world, focusing in particular on Classical and Hellenistic Greece, the Roman Empire and Late Antiquity. It thus discusses how archaeological evidence can be used to advance our understanding of ancient pilgrimage and ritual experience. The volume brings together a group of scholars who explore some of the rich archaeological evidence for sacred travel and movement, such as the material footprint of different activities undertaken by pilgrims, the spatial organization of sanctuaries and the wider catchment of pilgrimage sites, as well as the relationship between architecture, art and ritual. Contributions also tackle both methodological and theoretical issues related to the study of pilgrimage, sacred travel and other types of movement to, from and within sanctuaries through case studies stretching from the first millennium BC to the early medieval period.

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The public prominence of religion has increased globally in recent years, while places associated with religion, such as pilgrimage centers, and famous cathedrals, temples and shrines, have attracted growing numbers of visitors and media attention. Such developments are part of a global process where different forms of travel – physical movement such as labor and lifestyle migration, tourism of various forms, the cultural heritage industry and pilgrimage – have become a major feature of the modern world. These translocal and transnational processes involve flows of not just people but also material objects, ideas, information, images and capital. This series provides a new forum for studies based around these themes, drawing together research on the relationships between religion, travel and tourism from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, ranging from anthropology, sociology, geography, history and religious studies to newly emergent areas such as tourism and migration studies.

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Excavating Pilgrimage

Archaeological Approaches to
Sacred Travel and Movement in
the Ancient World

**Edited by Troels Myrup Kristensen
and Wiebke Frieze**



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Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	vii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
1 Introduction: Archaeologies of pilgrimage	1
WIEBKE FRIESE AND TROELS MYRUP KRISTENSEN	
2 Inter-cultural pilgrimage, identity, and the Axial Age in the ancient Near East	11
JOY MCCORRISTON	
3 Collective mysteries and Greek pilgrimage: The cases of Eleusis, Thebes and Andania	28
INGE NIELSEN	
4 Of piety, gender and ritual space: An archaeological approach to women's sacred travel in Greece	47
WIEBKE FRIESE	
5 The pilgrim's passage into the sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace	67
BONNA D. WESCOAT	
6 Pilgrimage and procession in the Panhellenic festivals: Some observations on the Hellenistic Leukophryena in Magnesia-on-the-Meander	87
KRISTOPH JÜRGENS	
7 Palimpsest and virtual presence: A reading of space and dedications at the Amphiareion at Oropos in the Hellenistic period	106
ALEXIA PETSALIS-DIOMIDIS	

8 Roman healing pilgrimage north of the Alps	130
MARTIN GRÜNEWALD	
9 Visiting the ancestors: Ritual movement in Rome's urban borderland	152
SASKIA STEVENS	
10 The pilgrim and the arch: Paths and passageways at Qal'at Sem'an, Sinai, Abu Mena, and Tebessa	166
ANN MARIE YASIN	
11 Movement as sacred mimesis at Abu Mena and Qal'at Sem'an	187
HEATHER HUNTER-CRAWLEY	
12 The allure of the saint: Late antique pilgrimage to the monastery of St Shenoute	203
LOUISE BLANKE	
13 Excavating Meriamlik: Sacred space and economy in late antique pilgrimage	224
TROELS MYRUP KRISTENSEN	
14 Pilgrimage and multi-religious worship: Palestinian Mamre in Late Antiquity	245
VLASTIMIL DRBAL	
Responses	
15 Excavating pilgrimage	265
JAS ELSNER	
16 Pilgrimage progress?	275
JAN N. BREMMER	
<i>Index</i>	285

Figures

1.1	Approaching Mount Lykaion from the north-west	5
2.1	Neolithic cattle skull ring (right) and commemorative stone platform (excavated, left) in Wadi Sana, Yemen	14
2.2	Betyls at Al-Lajjun, Jordan	16
3.1	Eleusis, general plan of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in the last phase	30
3.2	Ninnion tablet with the arrival of the procession and scenes from the mysteries	32
3.3	Thebes, general plan of the sanctuary of Kabeiros and Pais in Period V (50 BC–AD 100)	36
3.4a–d	Thebes, drawings from three Kabeirian <i>kantharoi</i> , a: Kabeiros reclining receives intiands; b and c: the arrival of intiands to the sanctuary with sacrificial animals, and a herm marking the entrance to the sanctuary; d: a procession scene	38
4.1	Epidauros. Propylon and sacred way in the back	49
4.2	Epidauros. Asclepieion	51
4.3	Pergamon. Demeter Sanctuary	53
4.4	Gela. Bitalemi Sanctuary	54
4.5	Bitalemi Sanctuary, Gela. Votive deposit	54
5.1	Restored plan of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace. 1,2,3. Unidentified Late Hellenistic buildings. 4. Unfinished Early Hellenistic building. 5. Byzantine fort. 6. Milesian Dedication. 7,8,10. Dining rooms. 9. Faux Bronze Age niche. 11. Stoa. 12. Nike Monument. 13. Theater. 14. Altar Court. 15. Hieron. 16. Hall of Votive Gifts. 17. Hall of Choral Dancers. 18. Sacred Way. 20. Rotunda of Arsinoe II. 22. Sacristy. 23. Anaktoron. 24. Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV. 25. Theatral Circle. 26. Propylon of Ptolemy II. 27. Southern Necropolis. 28. Doric Rotunda. 29. Neorion. 30. Stepped retaining wall. 31. Ionic Porch. 32. Hestiatorion	68

5.2	Above: Digital model of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, from the east. Below: Actual state view of the sanctuary, from the east.	71
5.3	Detail of the Sacred Way at the northwest corner of the Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV	72
5.4	Left: View of the Sacred Way, from the west. Right: Digital model of the Sacred Way, from the west	73
5.5	Aerial view of the central valley of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, with a view of the Sacred Way between the Rotunda and Hall of Choral Dancers	73
6.1	Plan of <i>temenos</i> and agora	90
6.2	Reconstruction by the author of the light incidence on the festive dossier in the agora's western portico	91
6.3	Schematic view of the procession	93
6.4	Possible genealogy of Leukippos, scheme	95
6.5	Centralized view of the <i>temenos</i> structures, montage	98
7.1	Plan of the Amphiareion at Oropos	108
7.2	The remains of the theatre of the Amphiareion at Oropos	109
7.3	Reconstruction drawing of the theatre of the Amphiareion at Oropos	110
7.4a–b	Double-sided inscribed stele with inventory from the Amphiareion	115
7.5	Statue base of Arsinoe III and Ptolemy IV Philopator with proxyeny decrees, c.224–201 BC	117
7.6	Marble portrait head of queen Arsinoe III, c.215 BC	118
7.7a–b	Reconstruction drawings of the statue base of Demokrite's dedication with four proxyeny decrees, c.225–200 BC	120
7.8	Reconstruction drawing of the statue base for a bronze equestrian sculpture originally dedicated to a Hellenistic monarch of c.300–275 BC and rededicated to Sulla c.86–81 BC	123
8.1	The Peutinger map with a section from Segment III after Miller 1887	134
8.2	Examples of journeys to places with (healing) springs and sanctuaries on the basis of selected inscriptions	135
8.3	Spa and cult centre of Aachen during the Roman period	137
8.4	Distribution of the glass bottles of the type Isings 103	140
8.5	Spa souvenir from the cult activities that took place at the thermal spring <i>Salus Umeritana</i> in northern Spain	141
9.1	Relief of the Torlonia collection, depicting a town and its surroundings	154
9.2	Funerary altar of Passiena Prima and L. Passienus Evaristus, Vatican necropolis of Santa Rosa	157
9.3	Drawing of the paintings inside the tomb of Patron	159
10.1	Qal'at Sem'an, plan of complex with village of Deir Sem'an (Telanissos), arch, and enclosure wall gate labeled	167

10.2	Qal'at Sem'an, "Triumphal" Arch from the south, end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century	169
10.3	Qal'at Sem'an, triple-arch gate of enclosure wall gate from the south, late fifth century	171
10.4	Abu Mena, plan of St. Menas pilgrimage complex and town to the north with arrows indicating archways	174
10.5	Sinai, diagram of paths and so-called prayer niches on Jebel Sufsaifa with arrows indicating lines of sight toward St. Catherine's and Mount Moses (Jebel Musa)	177
10.6	Sinai, "St. Stephen's Gate" and the so-called "Path of Steps" leading from the Monastery of St. Catherine to the peak of Jebel Musa	178
10.7	Tebessa, Arch of Caracalla	179
10.8	Tebessa, plan of city with Arch of Caracalla and Christian pilgrimage center (of St. Crispina?) labeled	180
10.9	Tebessa, reconstruction of elevation of the Christian pilgrimage center	181
11.1	The Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, India. View of the Golden Temple from the South	188
11.2	Menas <i>ampulla</i> . 8.5 × 6.9 × 1.8 cm. Earthenware. 7th century AD	191
11.3	Qal'at Sem'an, remains of the stylite's column	196
12.1	Map of Egypt, showing sites mentioned in article	204
12.2	Survey map of the White Monastery showing relationship between the modern monastery and the archaeological site	211
12.3	Map of the White Monastery church with emphasis on location of crypt, and the baptistery	212
12.4	Map and isometric plan of the funerary chapel at the White Monastery	215
13.1	Location of Meriamlik in the eastern Mediterranean	225
13.2	Map of Meriamlik	226
13.3	Remains of the outer precinct wall at Meriamlik	229
13.4	Cistern west of the cupola church, Meriamlik	236
13.5	<i>Arcosolia</i> graves lining the rock-cut passage into Meriamlik	237
13.6	Lid of Christian sarcophagus in the necropolis above Meriamlik	238
14.1	Haram Ramet el-Khalil: Enclosure (49 m × 65 m) constructed of monolithic stones	246
14.2	Haram Ramet el-Khalil: Remains of a church identified by A. E. Mader as the Constantinian basilica	247
14.3a-b	Two-sided mould, Byzantine, 4th century	252

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out of the discovery of a Neolithic ritual site in southern Yemen, where more than 40 sacrificed cattle skulls were ceremonially set in a commemorative oval. McCorriston's current research is centred in Dhufar, Oman, and examines monuments and expressions of territorial behavior among ancient pastoralists in Southern Arabia.

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Preface

Early versions of the contributions to this volume were presented at a symposium organized by the editors and held 9–10 May 2014 in the Department of History and Classical Studies, Aarhus University. This symposium was the first in a series of three organized by “The Emergence of Sacred Travel: Experience, Economy, and Connectivity in Ancient Mediterranean Pilgrimage”, a collaborative research project directed by Troels Myrup Kristensen and generously funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research’s *Sapere Aude* excellence programme between 2013 and 2017 (www.sacredtravel.dk). For the purposes of this volume, it was decided to commission two responses to place the contributions within a broader context. We are grateful to Jaś Elsner and Jan N. Bremmer for providing us with such thoughtful commentary on the volume.

For the generous support that allowed us to put together both symposium and publication, we would like to thank the Danish Council for Independent Research (DFF) and “The Ancient World: Tradition and Transformation” research programme in the School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University. For practical support during the conference, we are particularly grateful to Nicola Daumann. Lucy Seton-Watson provided efficient linguistic revision. Charlotte Helene Kjær Christensen and Stine Birk assisted with the final editing of the manuscripts. Finally, we would like to thank the editorial board of *Routledge Studies in Pilgrimage, Religious Travel and Tourism* for accepting the volume for publication, Michael Greenwood for his efficient editorial support, as well as the many anonymous readers whose comments have improved all aspects of the final outcome.

Abbreviations of ancient authors and epigraphic *corpora* follow (where applicable) *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition.

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1 Introduction

Archaeologies of pilgrimage

Wiebke Friese and Troels Myrup Kristensen

The study of pilgrimage in the ancient world has seen significant progress in recent years, not least since the late 1990s. Influential works include *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece* by Matthew Dillon (1997), as well as the anthology *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity*, edited by Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford (2005b), and most recently Rutherford's authoritative monograph *State Pilgrims and Sacred Observers in Ancient Greece* (2013). Even so, ancient pilgrimage continues to be a topic that is studied predominantly by means of epigraphy and other forms of textual sources. What has arguably been lacking in much of the literature cited above is indeed a more substantial and systematic incorporation of the material evidence that we have from places of pilgrimage across the Mediterranean and the Near East. So, for example, in his recent book, Rutherford devotes just five pages to material culture, and notes the difficulties of relating this evidence to the specific institution of *theoria*. However, many sites, monuments and objects must relate to sacred travel in much more general but equally important ways.

This volume extends the existing literature on ancient pilgrimage by placing material culture in the foreground, hence the title *Excavating Pilgrimage*. The contributions offered here thus work together in developing a place for archaeological methods in scholarship on sacred travel more broadly. The rich archaeological evidence presented here for different forms of sacred travel and movement, including everything from still-standing monumental architecture to the millions of pots, lamps and other objects that have been unearthed in excavations, should enable the broadening of our understanding of the phenomenon in significant ways. Individual contributions to this volume explore archaeological evidence for sacred travel and movement, and focus on different aspects related to this issue, such as the material footprint of activities undertaken by pilgrims, the spatial organization and the wider catchment of pilgrimage sanctuaries, as well as the relationship between architecture, art and ritual in the overall experience of visiting a sacred place. Texts are important for understanding many of these issues, but the material culture that has been excavated at sanctuaries across the Mediterranean and the Near East should provide us with an even broader palette of information than the texts, not least because of the quantities in which this evidence exists, but also because of the role that architecture and objects played as framing devices for the pilgrims'

experience at a much wider variety of sites than those that we know from texts. However, archaeologists have traditionally felt much better equipped to discuss buildings and structures in isolation rather than taking in the overall impact and staging of religious spaces, such as those visited by pilgrims. The methodological challenges of first identifying a pilgrimage site, and then reconstructing and interpreting the religious experience at that particular sacred place, based exclusively or primarily on material evidence, is accordingly one of the key themes that link together this book's contributions.¹

Definitions and typologies

Another key challenge in any study of pilgrimage is how to define the phenomenon and isolate it from other related practices, especially where it intersects with other more "secular" forms of travel, such as tourism and trade, or how to establish the relationship between pilgrimage and procession. It has proven to be difficult to define pilgrimage not only in the ancient context but also in more modern contexts, and scholarship has been much divided on this issue. In a recent review article on approaches to pilgrimage in the discipline of geography, the definition of the phenomenon was thus left as loose as a "distinct and special journey",² a definition that significantly downplays the religious character and role of the practice, which is probably most relevant in more modern contexts than those under study here.

Many other definitions pose similar problems and questions. For example, Dillon's definition of (ancient Greek) pilgrimage as "any journey undertaken for a specifically religious purpose, and which involved an overnight stay" is difficult to work with from an archaeological perspective (how do we establish whether visits to sanctuaries involved overnight stays on a regular basis without the aid of texts, and when most travellers stayed in temporary dwellings?). But it also completely sidelines *pèlerinages en passant*, i.e. instances in which pilgrimage was part of a longer journey which may have had many aims other than simply visiting a particular sanctuary.³ The emphasis that Elsner and Coleman place on the broader context of pilgrimage is furthermore missing in this definition, namely that "pilgrimage is not just a journey; it also involves the confrontation of travellers with rituals, holy objects and sacred architecture".⁴

These problems of definition explain to some degree why responses to the use of the term pilgrimage in the ancient context have sometimes been varied and sceptical: some scholars have even gone so far as to see the term as an impediment to our understanding of ancient religious practices.⁵ In light of these criticisms and the complexities of pilgrimage that can be observed in both the ancient and modern worlds, it seems best to adopt a more flexible approach that sees pilgrimage as consisting of a set of practices that can be configured in different ways and may be emphasized differently in different historical contexts. The archaeologist Joy McCorriston has thus identified five essential attributes of pilgrimage for her study region of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. In her model, pilgrimages (1) require mobility, (2) affirm social identity, (3) enable economic exchange, (4) have a temporal punctuation, and finally (5) incorporate a performative aspect,

such as ritual and feasting.⁶ It may be the case that not all of these attributes were equally important or formalized in the way that McCorriston observed them to be in her study, or in the way that they have been perceived in later traditions of pilgrimage. But separating sacred travel into a set of practices is the only way we can follow pilgrimage in its state of becoming over several millennia. Many of these practices also have a material footprint, thus making them accessible for more in-depth study by archaeologists.⁷

Other scholars have gone further than offering broad definitions of pilgrimage by developing a set of typologies of different kinds of pilgrimage, as they can be identified in different religious traditions in the ancient world. Especially influential in this respect has been Elsner and Rutherford's typology of Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian pilgrimage, offering twenty or so different configurations of sacred travel in these contexts.⁸ Their typology is a useful starting point – but again, it also presents a series of problems. While typologies can be helpful in order to distinguish between practices and to get an overall picture of the variety of the different forms of pilgrimage that can be identified in different religions, we arguably also lose some sense of the complexity of many of these types of sacred travel, and how different types can be intertwined in individual cases. The example of L. Aemilius Paullus and his journey through Greece following his defeat of the Macedonians in 168 BC offers an instructive case, mixing as it did aspects of philhellenism, military inspection, tourism (arguably also a modern construct, or at least with considerable ideological baggage as part of Western history) and pilgrimage. Similarly, in the late antique context, we have incredibly detailed information about Theophanes, who made a business trip from Hermopolis in Egypt to Antioch in AD 320. While the motivation for his travels clearly seems not to have been religious in character, we learn from the papyrus that inventoried the expenses of his journey that he did many things that we would expect of pilgrims, for example dedicating a gilt statue in a temple at Ascalon.⁹

Elsner and Rutherford's typology covers an especially rich variety of distinctive Greek types of pilgrimage (fourteen all in all, compared with four Roman types, and just two Judaeo-Christian types). In this case, one wonders if Greek reality ever really was as neat and clearly divided between different types of pilgrimage as this typology would entail, or whether dichotomies such as public/private, social/personal and communal/individual religious experience would have broken down in many cases, thus complicating the sense of rigid demarcation between the different types of pilgrimage that the model prescribes. Similarly, does the lack of different forms in their typology of Roman pilgrimage reflect less variety in pilgrimage traditions during this period, or does it perhaps reflect the fact that the realities of Roman pilgrimage were messier than earlier instances? Or, alternatively, do the fewer types of Roman pilgrimage rather suggest that less research that explicitly uses a pilgrimage framework has been undertaken on the topic of Roman sanctuaries?¹⁰

Rather than fine-tuning definitions and offering ever more closely delineated typologies, then, it may be more fruitful to see pilgrimage as a particular lens through which to study sanctuaries and sacred landscapes, as well as movement

through them. As such, the field of pilgrimage studies, as it has developed in recent years into a distinct field of research (as apparent from, for example, the appearance of the series to which this volume belongs), can be seen as offering a set of tools and methods through which to interrogate ancient texts and material culture, in line with how, for example, identity and gender have emerged as important frameworks more broadly within Classical studies, archaeology and many other disciplines. The rich variety of different methods and theories that are available within these fields forces scholars to be explicit about their aims and definitions, resembling the way in which we have stressed the need for being explicit about how the label of pilgrimage is adopted in particular case studies.

Sources and methods

The chapters in this volume tackle directly both methodological and theoretical issues related to the study of pilgrimage and different types of movement to, from and within sanctuaries through their chosen empirical case studies. By their very nature, movement and pilgrimage are ephemeral phenomena that leave few or no material remains behind. How then can we identify these practices in the archaeological record? Furthermore, how can we identify the actual pilgrims and their movements around landscapes and sanctuaries in search of encounters with the sacred? These issues of method are at the forefront of several contributions to this volume. The chapters in this volume show a general interest in reconstructing religious experience by means of architecture and other archaeological remains. This necessitates engaging with methodological discussions that lie at the heart of the archaeological discipline, namely how to work with ritual from an archaeological point of view.¹¹ Recent work on this topic has argued that archaeologists need to develop their own methods and theories in order to fully grasp the category of ritual as it can be studied by means of material culture.¹² This may indeed also be the case with pilgrimage, where theories and methods traditionally have been cherry-picked from other disciplines. In this way, the adoption of the perspective of pilgrimage in the study of the ancient world encourages scholars to think carefully about the possibilities as well as the limits of interdisciplinarity. The use of modern ethnographic data or analogies from other cultures or religions may make up for some of the gaps in our knowledge of the ancient world, but it also runs the risk of constructing a past that never existed. It is thus important to discuss the extent to which the application of interdisciplinary methods is useful within different ancient cultures and religious settings.

The perspective of pilgrimage entails thinking about not only where worshippers went but also where they came from. This makes us work harder to place sanctuaries within their landscape settings (and indeed catchment areas). Identifying routes and means of transportation is a first step in this direction (Figure 1.1). We may also ask how journeys were structured and staged, for example, by the construction of sacred ways. The geographical study of pilgrimage cited above describes “pilgrimage as a multifaceted practice that involves continuous interactions between movements and places, meanings and beliefs and lived experiences”.¹³ This emphasis on



Figure 1.1 Approaching Mount Lykaion from the north-west.

Photo: Troels Myrup Kristensen.

places and movements through landscapes provides us with a useful model of how archaeologists can shed further light on pilgrimage in different contexts.

The perspective of movement forces archaeologists to think more closely about spaces of performance – the open and archaeologically “empty” spaces that make up large parts of sanctuaries and sacred landscapes.¹⁴ How can performances and other activities in these spaces be reconstructed? And to what extent were such spaces manipulated by means of architecture or the display of statues, votives or other objects? Several chapters here demonstrate an interest in theories of performance and lean on methods from phenomenology that emphasize the central role of the body in experiencing and learning about the world, thus providing us with an embodied perspective on pilgrimage.

Finally, as noted above, the long-term perspectives provided by the archaeological engagement with the category of pilgrimage allow us to follow the practice in its state of becoming. Both continuities and discontinuities can thus be identified, and these must be equally important in order for us to fully understand the emergence of pilgrimage over time. For example, in many definitions, pilgrimage is described as a transformative event that changes the way that pilgrims see the world.¹⁵ But the long-term perspective provided by the essays in this volume suggests that this may be a relatively modern development in the history of pilgrimage, given that many pilgrimages and processions in the ancient world were more concerned with maintaining the *status quo*, for example, of the polis, or in

upholding particular religious identities rather than transforming them. The role of pilgrimage in creating social groups and state-building in the Near East has furthermore been explored in recent work by McCorriston, suggesting that the transformative role of pilgrimage may belong to a more recent phase in its development.¹⁶

Structure and contents of the book

This brief introduction has outlined a set of framing questions that are discussed within the context of the case studies that make up individual chapters. The volume as a whole aims to place discussions of sanctuaries, religious spaces and landscapes across the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds within the framework of pilgrimage and the broader historical trajectory of this culturally significant phenomenon. The chronological range of the contributions covers the period from Classical Greece to Late Antiquity, but begins with earlier instances of pilgrimage as they can be traced in the Near East during the first millennium BC (and possibly even earlier). While the overall structure of the volume is strictly chronological, the overarching thread is of a methodological nature: how can we work with pilgrimage based on material evidence, and how can we use pilgrimage as an analytical framework in studying religious practices and experiences in the ancient world? Although the contributors mainly stay within their own chronological specializations and approach the topic from different methodological directions, the overall structure of the volume is meant to provide a framework for further comparative work, as engagement with individual chapters allows readers to compare and contrast religious and social practices in relation to pilgrimage in different contexts. Several chapters furthermore bring to light important new material evidence for various kinds of pilgrimage in the ancient world.

In Chapter 2, “Inter-Cultural Pilgrimage, Identity, and the Axial Age in the Ancient Near East”, Joy McCorriston begins with the Neolithic to address how the archaeological record can be used to explore pilgrimage within multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities. By drawing on social theory, she discusses the connections between pilgrimage and state formation across the Near East, while focusing in particular on the case of Israelite cult and Jerusalem. The long-term perspective that she outlines for the development of pilgrimage in the Near East demonstrates a particularly powerful way in which archaeological evidence can be drawn into discussions of the emergence of sacred travel in the ancient world.

The following five chapters turn to ancient Greece. In Chapter 3, Inge Nielsen investigates “Collective Mysteries and Greek Pilgrimage: The Cases of Eleusis, Thebes and Andania”. Whereas the mystery cult at Eleusis and the Kabeireion at Thebes have yielded a range of archaeological finds to work with, the mystery cult at Andania is known only from textual sources. Nielsen emphasizes the importance of placing the sanctuaries within a broader landscape setting that incorporates the paths chosen by pilgrims and the architectural framing of the experiences that were part and parcel of visiting sacred places in the Greek world.

Andania is also among the sites taken up by Wiebke Friese in Chapter 4, “Of Piety, Gender and Ritual Space: An Archaeological Approach to Women’s Sacred

Travel in Greece”. Friese provides a new perspective on Greek pilgrimage by focusing specifically on the mobility of women that can be said to mirror that of the domestic sphere. Drawing on recent developments in gender archaeology, she discusses how sanctuaries accommodated both genders, as laid out for example in the so-called sacred law of Andania. She demonstrates that in most sanctuaries, gender-specific access was regulated temporally rather than strictly spatially.

In Chapter 5, “The Pilgrim’s Passage into the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace”, Bonna D. Wescoat takes us to the island in the Northern Aegean that housed an important mystery cult. On the basis of the ongoing excavations of the sanctuary of the Great Gods that Wescoat directs as well as digitally enhanced efforts to reconstruct the architecture and landscape, she follows the movements of the pilgrim. This approach is inspired by archaeological phenomenology and places the experience of a sanctuary in the foreground. It furthermore provides a new perspective on the difficult question of whether the rituals carried out at Samothrace mirrored those that were practiced at Eleusis.

Processions are an integral performative element in many pilgrimages. In Chapter 6, “Pilgrimage and Procession in the Panhellenic Festivals: Some Observations on the Hellenistic Leukophryena in Magnesia-on-the-Meander”, Kristoph Jürgens provides a detailed discussion of the importance of a highly structured procession in a major Hellenistic pilgrimage sanctuary in Asia Minor. The chapter combines epigraphic, visual and architectural evidence to reconstruct the procession to the festival of Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia-on-the-Meander that was established in 208 BC. The new festival was promoted internationally through invitations that were sent to cities across the Mediterranean and beyond. While the epigraphic evidence is well known in the literature, the chapter builds on recent fieldwork to place the procession within its topographical and experiential context within the festival.

In Chapter 7, “Palimpsest and Virtual Presence: A Reading of Space and Dedications at the Amphiareion at Oropos in the Hellenistic Period”, Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis explores pilgrimage to a healing and oracular sanctuary in northern Attica. She discusses the space of the sanctuary in relation to the Hellenistic concepts of the palimpsest and virtual presence. The chapter demonstrates the potential of juxtaposing the material culture (in this case especially votive dedications set up in the sanctuary) and broader cultural trends (here the Hellenistic cultural imaginary) in order to understand the development of pilgrimage practices over time.

The following two chapters focus on Roman pilgrimage. In Chapter 8, Martin Grünewald focuses on “Roman Healing Pilgrimage North of the Alps”. In particular, he mines the extensive evidence from inscriptions of visitors to healing sanctuaries in Gaul and Germany. The epigraphy thus gives us the names of specific individuals who had travelled across considerable distances to visit sanctuaries. Interestingly, it is clear from this evidence that women undertook many of these journeys. The chapter furthermore emphasizes the difficulty of isolating religious travel from other forms of travel in the ancient world, noting that many different motivations were probably responsible for the fact that non-locals visited sanctuaries.

In Chapter 9, “Visiting the Ancestors: Ritual Movement in Rome’s Urban Borderland”, Saskia Stevens turns to the *urbs* in order to investigate movement from city to cemeteries outside the city gates. Stevens emphasizes that this kind of mobility may be difficult to understand as pilgrimage in the strictest sense, but that it nonetheless shares many characteristics with sacred movement more broadly. As such, the practice may be profitably seen through the lens of pilgrimage.

The next five chapters focus on early Christian pilgrimage, a field that traditionally has been studied from the perspective of material culture, given the central role of this phenomenon in the art and archaeology of Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, but which may be enriched by further dialogue with scholarship on earlier (and indeed also later) periods. In Chapter 10, “The Pilgrim and the Arch: Paths and Passageways at Qal’at Sem’an, Sinai, Abu Mena and Tebessa”, Ann Marie Yasin investigates an aspect of the massive investment that was made in the sixth century in Christian pilgrimage sites across the Mediterranean. While many previous studies have emphasized the functional aspects of these building programmes, Yasin turns our attention to the impact that new architectural schemes had on the experience of pilgrims. In particular, she focuses on the paths and pathways that pilgrims passed through in their visits to important pilgrimage centres in Syria, Egypt and Algeria.

Abu Mena and Qal’at Sem’an remain in focus in Chapter 11, “Movement as Sacred Mimesis at Abu Mena and Qal’at Sem’an” by Heather Hunter-Crawley. Similar to Wescoat and Yasin, this chapter takes a phenomenological approach inspired by recent developments in archaeological theory. It opens with an ethnographic vignette from contemporary India in order to illuminate parts of the experience of moving through late antique Christian pilgrimage sites.

In Chapter 12, “The Allure of the Saint: Late Antique Pilgrimage to the Monastery of St Shenoute”, Louise Blanke takes us further down the Nile to the White Monastery at Sohag where ongoing excavations have provided important new evidence for the monastery’s development, rituals and facilities. Whereas the textual sources provide plenty of evidence for late antique pilgrimage in Egypt, it is harder to provide concrete links between individual buildings and the pilgrimage “economy”, both at the White Monastery and at other monastic sites in the country.

In Chapter 13, “Excavating Meriamlik: Sacred Space and Economy in Late Antique Pilgrimage”, Troels Myrup Kristensen turns to the important but under-explored pilgrimage sanctuary of Thekla at Meriamlik in south-central Turkey. Although Meriamlik has received little archaeological fieldwork apart from a brief campaign in 1907, the site offers an opportunity to incorporate the significant literary testimony for the cult of Thekla with the scant material culture. Kristensen thus focuses on how sacred space was constituted as well as the different components of the site’s “sacred economy”.

In Chapter 14, “Pilgrimage and Multi-Religious Worship: Palestinian Mamre in Late Antiquity”, Vlastimil Drbal investigates the archaeological evidence for the multi-religious character of the Palestinian sanctuary of Mamre that was visited by pagan, Jewish and Christian pilgrims into the fifth and possibly sixth century AD.

The volume concludes with two invited responses by Jaś Elsner and Jan N. Bremmer who provide some further perspectives on the implications of this volume as a whole. Both pieces note the growing interest in ancient pilgrimage from the 1990s onwards and shed light on important “turns” in the development of this field. The two responses offer an opportunity to reflect more broadly on the historical trajectory of pilgrimage as it can be gauged through the archaeology.

Notes

- 1 As was the case with a Peruvian sanctuary in Silverman 1994, which was part of a *World Archaeology* special issue on “Archaeology of Pilgrimage”.
- 2 Scriven 2014, 249. See *Ibid.*, 251–252 for an overview of the variety of definitions of pilgrimage.
- 3 Dillon 1997, xviii.
- 4 Coleman and Elsner 1995, 6.
- 5 This discussion is outlined in Kristensen 2012, 67–68, providing further bibliography.
- 6 McCorriston 2011, 51–53.
- 7 For a “materialized” perspective on late antique pilgrimage, see also Yasin 2012.
- 8 Elsner and Rutherford 2005a, 9–30.
- 9 Matthews 2006, 51, 55.
- 10 Kiernan 2012 is a rare attempt to explicitly approach Roman sanctuaries in the North-western provinces from the perspective of pilgrimage.
- 11 For a recent overview, see Kyriakidis 2007.
- 12 Berggren and Nilsson Stutz 2010.
- 13 Scriven 2014, 251.
- 14 See also Connelly 2011.
- 15 Scriven 2014, 252.
- 16 McCorriston 2013.

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2 Inter-cultural pilgrimage, identity, and the Axial Age in the ancient Near East

Joy McCorriston

Introduction

The period between 800–200 BC in the ancient Near East brackets Karl Jasper's Axial Age – a naissance of new ideas – and the economic interdependency of an Iron Age World System; it further coincides with Assyrian imperialism. Forced displacements and resettlement of populations and ethnic mixing produced traumatic impacts on ethnic and cultural groups under Assyrian political hegemony.¹ During such an era and within the new political, economic, and social referencing under manifestly changing conditions, one may hypothesize that pilgrimage provided inter-cultural spaces to integrate peoples of different cultural backgrounds. This study relies on broad anthropological themes in practice theory and World Systems Theory (WST) to attempt an ambitious sweep in time and space, connecting Western Semitic cultures in pilgrimage through an archaeological pastiche of the shifting rites of identity formation.

What is inter-cultural pilgrimage? Pilgrimage – which embraces a constellation of characteristics including mobility, an affirmation of social identity and inscription of belonging, material and economic exchanges, punctuated rather than habitual participation, and dramatic rites – is a socially-constituting framework with refracted practices across a long timeframe.² Inter-cultural pilgrimage is a conceptual extension of Anthony Giddens³ intriguing problem of “inter-cultural space,” where different societies encounter one another, not as collisions of integral cultural units but as the intersecting peripheral paths and spaces of multiple individuals habituated to different collectives of cultural practice. Giddens understood the significance of daily practice (“all social life is episodic”⁴) but struggled with “definite cultural principles which ‘stand out’ in bas-relief from a background of a range of other systemic relationships in which they are embedded . . . to produce a specific overall ‘clustering of institutions’ across time and space.”⁵ There should exist “time-space edges” that characterize the “connections between societies of different social types.”⁶ Inter-cultural pilgrimage is a time-space edge bringing together different socio-cultural communities.

The ancient Near East of the Bronze and Iron Ages arguably was formative to the emergence of great pilgrimage traditions in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Major pilgrimage in Islam and in Christianity unites believers from culturally different origins who travel episodically from their home communities to holy sites,

including Mecca and Jerusalem. Even while recognizing the pitfalls inherent in typologizing different societies and cultures,⁷ this paper addresses the problem of cultures and cultural institutions reproducing their differences through interaction rather than mutual isolation. Such interaction indisputably characterized the ancient Near East through Bronze and Iron Ages during ascendant world system cycles.⁸

Such geography of cultural production and reproduction offers an important backdrop to this project explaining inter-cultural pilgrimage spaces and social identity. This paper builds on an understanding of pilgrimage as social constitution in mobile societies, one developed through the archaeology of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in Southern Arabia.⁹ Recognizing that sedentary communities appropriated pilgrimage as a socio-economic and political tool,¹⁰ this project highlights the syncretization of pilgrimage to emergent political centers in an era and region in which new cultural and socio-political identities were forged in the multi-cultural landscape of the southern Levant.¹¹

The Axial Age between 800–200 BC offers another important backdrop because of its emphasis on changing ideologies, offsetting the base materialism inherent in archaeology. Axial Age refers to a widespread emergence of principles foundational to modern ethics and religious beliefs. Karl Jaspers described an Axial Age as a convergence (albeit one not tightly resolved either chronologically or spatially) of emergent spiritual and philosophical traditions focused on inner transcendence and self-discipline as resolution of external human conflict.¹² Across the Old World, Jaspers perceived different cultural outcomes with cross-cultural commonalities in a broadly humanistic and universalizing emergent human condition framed in differential spiritual expressions.¹³ Broadly speaking, one might represent the Axial transformation as one shifting individuals away from an ideology of identity as social practice to self-identification through inner discipline.¹⁴ This paper is concerned not with the emergent ideologies of Axial formation and archaeological validation of Jaspers' philosophy but with the archaeological record of pre-existing social rites ultimately syncretized to a new formulation of identity.

Referencing the Axial Age broadens theoretical focus from reductionist economic and materialist explanations of human social life to include ideology, agency, and structuration critical in understanding the reproduction of culture and perpetuation of long-term frameworks. Inter-cultural space traditionally has been framed by World Systems Theory. WST explains emergent political frameworks in economic terms and historically links inter-cultural connections to the development of long-distance trading economies anchored in materialism.¹⁵ Even as archaeologists rather readily recognize the material correlates of vibrant world systems, they may struggle to explore ideological referencing, including pilgrimage, in the inter-cultural spaces of a world system.¹⁶

Defining pilgrimage in archaeology

In order to hypothesize that pilgrimage provided inter-cultural spaces to integrate peoples of different cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to identify pilgrimage in the archaeological record. Pilgrimage movement is distinct from other journeys

because of its socially-constituting aspects outside of daily practice – pilgrims may be habitually sedentary, mobile, or both, but their interaction is in-habitual. Pilgrimage can be hard to detect archaeologically. Pilgrimage may leave few material traces, in part because it involves temporary displacement and in part because the material exchanges that pilgrimage facilitates do not of themselves implicate a pilgrimage journey. Much social theory has long preferred economic and materialist explanations of human behavior with an implicit rationalist underpinning,¹⁷ so that alternative motives for displacement and mobility carry a higher burden of archaeological proof. Pilgrims are moreover agents who decide to undertake pilgrimage for a variety of convergent reasons, and agents are notoriously difficult to detect archaeologically. Archaeological resolution is better attuned to a compilation of events and individual actions. Easier to see are the localities where pilgrimage has left its mark, and archaeological research should therefore focus more appropriately on pilgrimage places. These are easiest to see where there is a material record of monuments and offerings that indicate episodic gatherings to commemorate earlier socially-constituting rites.

Prehistoric Western Semitic pilgrimage

Neolithic pilgrimage

In the ancient Near East, pilgrimage places are those where the activities of a temporary gathering, a sacrifice, and a feast have occurred,¹⁸ and the archaeological record shows that such activities were often commemorated in a memorial or monument with subsequent re-visits.¹⁹ Demonstrating that a gathering, sacrifice, and feast co-occurred and were subsequently commemorated may require extraordinary preservation and an elimination of alternate economic explanations. Only recently have archaeologists begun to explore and accept the significance of pilgrimage activities in Neolithic societies, which probably constituted themselves through pilgrimage prior to agricultural settlements. Pilgrimage offers a powerful framework for social constitution in mobile societies. The impressive remains at Neolithic Göbekli Tepe (Turkey), with its massive limestone pillars, stone installations, deliberate filling and burial of structures, and scant signs of permanent residence, suggest that a mobile population gathered for feasting and collective labor in monumental construction and returned periodically to continue and commemorate.²⁰ At Kfar Ha Horesh in the western Levant, the remains of sacrificial animals point to intermittent feasts at a site not permanently occupied by a Neolithic village, but possibly close to several.²¹ And a recent analysis of the first sites where charred plant remains point to the new significance of cereals in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A now suggests that the intensive collection and incipient cultivation of these resources may have supported large, impermanent gatherings critical in an emerging social life otherwise difficult to sustain.²² Domestication itself, at least plant domestication, may stem from pilgrimage priorities.

Nor is the Neolithic emergence of pilgrimage as a means of social constitution limited to the Eastern Mediterranean Fertile Crescent. African pastoralists



Figure 2.1 Neolithic cattle skull ring (right) and commemorative stone platform (excavated, left) in Wadi Sana, Yemen.

Courtesy of the RASA project.

around 8000 years ago were sacrificing cattle in mortuary-linked feasting that they commemorated with stone monuments and perhaps further sacrifices in Saharan pastures now desertified with the receding monsoon.²³ These traditions of cattle sacrifices and cooperative labor gatherings around mortuary rites continued through much of early Saharan prehistory,²⁴ plausibly instrumental in the constitution of Africa's earliest complex chiefdoms.²⁵ And in Arabia, where domesticated cattle may have arrived from the southern Levant or Africa, cattle sacrifice, feasting, and the commemoration of a great gathering marks the Neolithic site of Shi'b Kheshiya in the middle Wadi Sana, Hadramawt (Yemen). Neolithic herders converging from multiple regions set up a ring of more than 40 sacrificed cattle skulls (Figure 2.1).²⁶ This grisly display was buried, but the pilgrims or their descendants later constructed an adjacent stone platform and standing stone.²⁷ Similar monuments between 7000–6000 years old have been noted in Hadramawt²⁸ and across southern and eastern Arabia.²⁹

Post-Neolithic traditions

If pilgrimage existed widely from the Neolithic as a key social constitution, it persisted thereafter. There exist archaeological indications of post-Neolithic, Western Semitic pilgrimage practices in the gatherings, sacrifices, and feasts of the mobile

precursors of Canaanite and Israelite societies. Evidence of an indisputable triad of gathering, sacrifice, and feast is not common in the archaeological record, but there is a long tradition of pilgrimage places, some of which retained the sanctity of earlier traditions into a subsequent era. These pilgrimage places leave an archaeological record.

One of the most widely recognized archaeological indicators of re-visitations by mobile groups is the presence of *massebah* (pl. *masseboth*, Hebrew) or *bayt-al* (Arabic), upright stones that signify the presence or dwelling of a divinity. In northern Arabian and Levantine contexts, these are commonly unworked, while they may be worked in southern Arabia. In documented and historical traditions, these stones are not in themselves the image of a divinity, nor the god itself, but merely signify the presence of a divinity.³⁰ Uzi Avner cites the uses of standing stones across the Near East in antiquity as boundary stelae, treaty markers, and attesting a vow,³¹ all practices known from historical texts.³² Standing stones also commemorated an event or ancestor, perhaps at a cenotaph or burial site, but this function ultimately merges with that of housing the divinity where apotheosis occurred, as was likely the case in the South Arabian pantheon.³³ Apotheosis of ancestors is a phenomenon more generally known, and some of the kinship studies common in anthropology of the last century suggest that most genealogical memories, absent writing, become attenuated after about five to eight generations, immortalizing an eponymous ancestor.

In the Levant, standing stones have been erected more commonly in arid regions where mobility and temporary visits rather than long-term settlement has characterized human occupation.³⁴ Seasonal rounds in search of pasture and game in a landscape of low biomass afford limited opportunities for social connections beyond the immediate household. Pilgrimage places in deserts mark and commemorate gatherings and re-visitations that emphasized not only people's relationships to their god but also their links one to another in a broader social schema embracing not only the living but their ancestral ties. Durkheim argued that religious ritual actually manifests a reverence for society itself. If so, then a temporary observance of religious community around a shrine actually manifests social ideals. William Robertson-Smith articulated this principle in his early study of *The Religion of the Semites*, in which he argued that pilgrimage founded on the principles of hospitality (serving a feast to guests) could establish a wide community of believers linked through social obligations. And, argued Robertson-Smith, this widening social cohesion also served to attenuate the direct relationship between man and divinity manifest in standing stones.³⁵

Masseboth are frequently connected to high places,³⁶ an association that historically and in ethnographic traditions across the Near East appears linked to invocation of rainfall.³⁷ Standing stones appear from the 6th millennium BC and later. Too numerous to catalogue here, they include well-recognized examples in the interior of southern Arabia, at Midamman on the western Tihamma of Yemen, Rajajjil in northern Arabia, and examples in the Negev and eastern deserts of Jordan, such as the *betyls* near the springs at Lajjun (Figure 2.2).³⁸

The massive scale of some monoliths provides compelling evidence of a gathering, for these required a substantial and cooperative work party to erect. None of



Figure 2.2 Betyls at Al-Lajjun, Jordan. These monoliths stand 1.5–2 m in height.
Photo: Joy McCorrison.

these sites represent places of permanent occupancy. A community feast, enlisting yet more labor in its preparation, would support a substantial gathering, albeit a temporary one in non-fertile zones. Masseboth sites moreover are places of re-visitation, for archaeologists find associated with them the artifacts and successive constructions of multiple periods, indicative of commemoration and recall. Nearby are sometimes so-called offering stones and sometimes stone bowls appropriate for liquids, both of which evoke the possibility of sacrifice.³⁹ These associations of standing stones and the multi-period traces of pilgrimage are absent in the settled zones of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia, where there are moreover no later textual records of pilgrimage as defined here.⁴⁰ Masseboth and betyls persist as a predominantly desert phenomenon of the Western Semitic tradition and were only latterly integrated into the social lives of settled communities.

One notable association in the Levantine archaeological record is between masseboth and the site of open-air sanctuaries. Some sanctuaries⁴¹ have close similarities to platform structures with standing stones from southern Arabia⁴² and may conform to a common pilgrimage tradition of commemoration and re-visitation. The masseboth are set within or before the sanctuary site, which may accommodate 50–400 people.⁴³ Open-air sanctuaries dated from the 5th to the

middle 3rd millennium BC have been documented at Ein Gedi, Tulaylat Ghassul, Gilat, Hartuv, Arad, Megiddo XIX, XI, Gezer, Hazor, and Byblos and have been revisited and re-consecrated over thousands of years.⁴⁴ Thus the open-air sanctuaries imply a repetitive use for gathering (a court large enough to accommodate 400 people), sacrifice (offerings remnant in the archaeological record include shell and exogenous flint) and feasts in desert places where food is not normally abundant.

Pilgrimage syncretized to state formation

Pilgrimage activities and, in many cases, pilgrimage places were ultimately integrated into the social lives of settled communities. For southern Arabia, this process and its role in the federalization of South Arabian Iron Age kingdoms from 800 BC has been described elsewhere.⁴⁵ An economic pillar of South Arabian kingdoms, the development of the incense traffic with northern Arabia, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean seemingly fueled social changes congruent with the expectations of WST. But the social constitution of federated South Arabian communities did not, as WST would predict, rely principally on the manipulation of surplus and exotic wealth by elites. Instead, it relied upon the appropriation and manipulation of pilgrimage, an Arabian tradition rooted in the Neolithic and evident throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages.⁴⁶ South Arabian states and the safe passages of incense caravans were built socially by confederating distant tribes, sometimes culturally different groups, in some cases hi-jacking pilgrimage from a local sanctuary and orienting its practice to a federal (central) shrine. In Hadramawt, the incursion of Sabaean rulers coincides with the appearance of a federal god, Sayyin, who replaced Hawl and other local deities.⁴⁷ In the Sabaean kingdom, a federal god Almaqah replaced 'Attar, and pilgrimage was re-oriented toward Almaqah's shrine at Ma'rib.⁴⁸ This phenomenon united the social identities of different tribal groups who came at different proscribed times (according to textual records),⁴⁹ practicing their differences in pilgrimage while participating in an inter-cultural, albeit habitually marginal, path to a central shrine. It marks the beginnings of inter-cultural pilgrimage.

Israelite cult and incipient inter-cultural pilgrimage

South Arabia is an example of a broader phenomenon in which pilgrimage places were re-interpreted and the institution of pilgrimage syncretized to unite social identities of multiple cultural groups in inter-cultural space. This process offers an important perspective on the formulation of Israelite identity in the Iron Age, during which time the Jerusalem pilgrimage was likely organized and centralized.

An Iron Age Jerusalem pilgrimage?

Some argue that the centrality of Jerusalem emerged late, perhaps as a struggle among disparate groups to establish a post-exilic temple,⁵⁰ while others attribute to Hezekiah the emphasis on the YHW cult and its centrality in Jerusalem.⁵¹ On

textual evidence, Mark Smith argues that the Exodus story of Moses leading Israelites to the high place of Mount Zion, written as part of the compilation of the Old Testament by Jews in exile to instruct in theological law, was modeled on the cult of pilgrimage already familiar in Israelite and Judaite identity in the seventh century BC. An annual gathering, sacrifice, and feast at Mount Moriah in pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem served as a model for the narrative of the arrival of God's people in the Promised Land and the deliverance of law.⁵²

The archaeological record is an informative source for the cultural context in which Biblical texts were written⁵³ and provides insight on the changing practices and inter-cultural expression of pilgrimage in the formulation of an Israelite identity. Despite a Biblical narrative that aggrandizes the constructions of David and Solomon, Iron Age Jerusalem appears to have been fundamentally a modest agrarian community lacking the monumental architecture of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and other highly urbanized sites of its time.⁵⁴ There is ceramic and architectural evidence of a settled community from the Iron I period in Jerusalem, probably supported by terraced agriculture and modest irrigation of fruit trees and vines along the Kidron Valley.⁵⁵ Included in these remains are cultic stands and statuettes comparable to those found in other Canaanite contexts,⁵⁶ but the archaeological evidence for major public works is rather scant.

Nevertheless, Solomon's temple is said to be attached to the palace of the king, and thereby appropriated to the monarchy the social identity attached to pilgrimage practice. The largest early buildings in the excavations of "King David's City" in Jerusalem lie on the spur closest to the high holy place. Whether these remains may justifiably be considered King David's Palace,⁵⁷ the appropriation of a central cult to royal identity by attaching a palace administration to a central cult site has parallels in textual descriptions of the Aramean kingdoms at Damascus⁵⁸ and at Dan and Bethel.

The appropriation of federal god and shrine to political sovereignty also accompanied a suppression of local cults. The archaeological record shows a long continuity of Canaanite gods apparent in household devotions and in lesser shrines,⁵⁹ some of which were in the Late Bronze Age appended to Canaanite political control. One such example is the so-called "Ceremonial Precinct" at Hazor, which may have served as cultic building or administrative center adjacent to the long-standing cultic high site (with masseboth), even while other shrines existed throughout the city.⁶⁰ Such high sites hint at long-term continuities of cultic practices (including pilgrimage?) that manifest their beginnings among mobile desert pastoralists.

Whenever pilgrimage of all Judahite males became oriented to a central shrine in Jerusalem, whether under Hezekiah,⁶¹ or later,⁶² this practice served to unify under one deity the disparate identities of multiple tribal groups, a phenomenon taking place in other Iron Age communities.⁶³ The first archaeological evidence for Israelite pilgrimage to Jerusalem appears in the Herodian period (first century BC–first century AD) with the distribution of southern lamps manufactured around Jerusalem among the Jewish communities of northern Israel but not among known Gentile communities.⁶⁴ Certainly after exile in Babylon, the centrality of the Jerusalem shrine and YHW was acknowledged in pilgrimage practice. There is some

controversy whether Samaritan practices of the Hellenistic-Roman period stem from pre-exilic northern Israelite traditions⁶⁵ or were appropriated from Judaic traditions by Assyrian deportees during exile.⁶⁶ Samaritan pilgrimage consisted of a gathering, sacrifice, and feast at Mount Gerizim (Shechem) persistent through the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, and Samaritans were clearly viewed as non-Jewish others in the early post-Temple Rabbinical period.⁶⁷

Biblical references to other pilgrimage sites include Shechem, Bethel, Sinai, Gilgal, and Beersheba.⁶⁸ What happened in Jerusalem was part of a broader phenomenon consolidating a social and political order among mobile and settled groups and fits within an Iron Age model of emergent leaders incorporating the allegiances of an expanding political network.⁶⁹ Local kin-based polities and the economic trade routes that connected them in Judah and Edom were administered from fortified towns with a tribal god and palace-based administrative structure.⁷⁰ These locales served as pivots for mobile tribal groups engaged in trade, intersecting with settled populations and with political allegiance to a monarchical kingdom.⁷¹ By attaching administrative functions to a tribal shrine, such a pilgrimage place could refract multiple cultural identities in distinct gatherings and exchanges in inter-cultural space. In a late-period example of local control, the Galgūla family administered adjacent named shrines about 14 km southwest of Hebron. One shrine was to the goddess ‘Uzza – a north and middle Arabian deity – and the other a local shrine to Yhw/Yhwh/Yhh, a Judahite and Samaritan god. At a time when Jerusalem’s centrality was clearly contested, this Galgūla family, known in Babylonian exile, was named in fourth-century BC ostraca (inscribed ceramic shards) that identify the Galgūla as landowners. The ostraca also indicate ethnic mixing of Edomites, Greeks, and others in the vicinity of their shrines.⁷²

A strengthening Iron Age Israelite monarchy in the hill country would have had an impact on local political economy. Control of the long-standing trade corridor along the Beersheba valley brought the northern end of Arabian trade within the economic control of the northern kingdom. As political power shifted northwards, desert people lost their monopoly on Arabian trade, pivotal to the economic system of the south, and a critical element in sedentism in the south. With the reversion of southern groups to nomadic subsistence, Negev sites were abandoned.⁷³ Israelite groups established administrative centers in the Beersheba valley and were empowered to orient pilgrimage toward an Israelite god.

Pilgrimage and the Axial Age

Inter-cultural pilgrimage was a process of appropriation and federalization of pilgrimage places that took place during the emergence of state political identity. During the Iron Age, not only were small states forming, but many were ultimately absorbed into the Assyrian Empire, whether by conquest or vassalage. As in the case of Judean Hezekiah’s purported hegemonic orientation of the YHW cult and pilgrimage toward Jerusalem, Assyrian territorial aspirations impacted local power structures and local manipulation of ideology. Assyrian records attest the population displacements and resettlements that brought elites from the conquered

Israelite northern kingdom into Assyrian exile and into contact with multiple other cultural groups.⁷⁴ Under these conditions, a putative and defrayed pilgrimage to a central and iconic shrine, even if unachievable by subject peoples, offered an imagined space in which the enactment of different identities achieved an integrative socio-political entity of exiled groups. For those who could not actually go, a common pilgrimage destination in Jerusalem served to bind peoples from the northern and southern kingdoms into a cult of YHW centered afar and unappropriated by Assyrian overlords.

In considering the effect of Assyrian conquest, first of the northern Israelite kingdom and ultimately of the southern Judean one, on inter-cultural pilgrimage, it is important to review, albeit in brief, the broader Assyrian policies toward local religious practices of subject peoples. Assyrian rulers themselves participated in hegemonic religious practices while leaving many local religious traditions largely unaffected. Assyrians cultivated a narrative of a god or goddess that abandoned its conquered people, with its divinity restored by Assyrians. This leitmotif was enacted by the physical removal of a god's image to Assur and its ceremonial return to its native shrine with great fanfare,⁷⁵ sometimes accompanied by a statue of the divine ruler and a proclamation of Assur's supremacy.⁷⁶ This practice bound local gods into the Assyrian pantheon under Assur, a symbolic vassalage of the local deity. (Incidentally, this practice puts the aniconism of the YHW cult in a new light, for a deity lacking a cult image could not be exiled.) In the unusual case of Harran, where the moon god cult was revived and endured as a rare site of multi-cultural visitations, royal Assyrian patronage was "a tangible extension of Assyrian authority wearing the familiar livery of a popular regional cult."⁷⁷ Holloway suggests that prestige and demonstrated empire-building qualities of the cult of the moon god of Harran was important in its revival and its endurance.⁷⁸ Assyrian reverence in a local cult was rare.

Assyrian cultic practices stemmed from a Mesopotamian tradition lacking pilgrimage. Although there were ceremonial journeys by elites and cultic images from one city to the next and from one god's house to the next,⁷⁹ these visits referenced hospitality and diplomatic alliances. They did not serve as general gatherings, sacrifices, and feasts to bind wider social identities. Fundamentally Mesopotamian religion was based on the concept of the household, and the house of the god served as a metaphor for social cohesion.⁸⁰ The cult of Assur, with its temple of Assur built on a ziggurat and continuing earlier traditions,⁸¹ emphasized the daily feeding and meals, festival events with offerings to the god, supplying food to the temple, calendrical events, and the maintenance of the god's household with its constituent participants in the god's cult, the prime being the king.⁸² Pilgrimage was not part of the picture.

Against this backdrop, a federal Jerusalem pilgrimage emerged as the basis for liturgical instruction and cohesive identity among exiles to Assur from Israel and Judah,⁸³ maintaining a distinct social identity of these exiles within the Assyrian heartland. Although many of these deportees and their descendants could not physically engage in Jerusalem pilgrimage, its cultic significance provided a venue, if highly infrequent or imagined, in which Israelite and Judahite identities could

reproduce their differences through interaction in inter-cultural space. And actual practice of Jerusalem pilgrimage as part of a YHWH cult in the northern kingdom under Assyrian rule served to reify Israelite identity in an ethnically diverse population within Israel, for Assyrians had forcibly removed many Israelites and re-settled Assyrians, Aramaeans, and other peoples in these conquered lands.⁸⁴ Pilgrimage was thus poised to have a formative effect on emergent Jewish identity in exile as a motif for those who could not physically go on pilgrimage. This is a period and context that potentially set the stage for a metaphorical spiritual journey and symbolic gathering, sacrifice, and feast celebrated by those unable to participate in physical displacements.

Conclusions

Given archaeologists' predilection for materialism and economic rationale governing the explanation of cultural remains, an unequivocal archaeological signature of prehistoric pilgrimage is always difficult to pinpoint. Nonetheless, there is clear continuity from prehistoric times in the maintenance of Levantine and Arabian ritual sites that in historic times became pilgrimage destinations. With the rise of complex societies and the challenges inherent in integrating local and regional communities and identities within the framework of a state, appropriation of socially-constituting practices and ideologies to state governance is a well-recognized strategy. The challenge in recognizing ancient pilgrimage in the Near East becomes even greater when pilgrimage became a symbolic experience without material manifestation, as apparently occurred during the codification of Jewish theological law.

The compilation of the Hebrew Old Testament, with its attestation of a focal Jerusalem pilgrimage, linked to a unique and federating god, is the topic of a broader academic discourse, but there is independent evidence in the archaeological record, including the ancient Western Semitic tradition of pilgrimage, that provides critical insight into the cultural context in which this compilation and its concurrent cross-cultural discourse occurred. This sweeping survey through time and space has connected an array of Western Semitic cultures in pilgrimage, which initially served to unite physically separated households into broader communities with communal identity. As a federalizing tactic, pilgrimage in its inter-cultural sense provided the framework for social constitution of multi-ethnic polities in which the differences among different social groups could be reified and manifested through pilgrimage practice in common space.

Notes

- 1 Liverani 1988; Postgate 1974; 2007, 41, 175; Wilkinson 2000.
- 2 McCorriston 2011; 2013.
- 3 Giddens 1984, 367, 115, 174.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 244.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 164.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 144.

- 7 E.g., Yoffee 2005.
- 8 Frank 1993; Stremlin 2008.
- 9 McCorriston 2011; McCorriston *et al.* 2012; 2014.
- 10 McCorriston 2013.
- 11 Glock 1999.
- 12 Armstrong 2006; Salamun 2008.
- 13 Mall 2008, 221–222.
- 14 Indeed, pilgrimage ultimately became a medium to seek and elevate an individual's relationship to the divine; Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* ([1678] 1975) describes metaphorically a spiritual journey, orienting the inner pilgrim, and eliminating any actual physical displacement.
- 15 Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991; Frank 1993; Wallerstein 1974; Wolf 1982.
- 16 *Sensu* Giddens, above.
- 17 Ingold 1996; Taylor 2006.
- 18 McCorriston 2011.
- 19 McCorriston 2013; McCorriston *et al.* 2011.
- 20 Schmidt 2005.
- 21 Goring-Morris and Kolska Horwitz 2007.
- 22 Asouti and Fuller 2013.
- 23 Applegate *et al.* 2001; Di Lernia 2006.
- 24 E.g., Chaix 1988; Chaix and Grant 1993; Di Lernia *et al.* 2013.
- 25 Wengrow 2006.
- 26 Henton *et al.* 2014.
- 27 McCorriston *et al.* 2012.
- 28 Braemer *et al.* 2003.
- 29 McCorriston *et al.* 2014; Méry *et al.* 2009.
- 30 E.g., Lammens 1919; Pirenne 1976.
- 31 Avner 2002.
- 32 Coogan 1974.
- 33 Korotayev 1993; Lammens 1919.
- 34 Avner 2002, 50–51.
- 35 Robertson-Smith 1907.
- 36 Avner 2002.
- 37 Knysh 1993; Lammens 1926; Rodinov 1997; Rubin [1990] 1999; Sergeant 1954.
- 38 All three sites probably date from the third–second millennium BC.
- 39 Avner 2002; Mazar and Miroschedji 1996.
- 40 Avner 2002, 48, *contra* Ristvet 2011. Ritual journeys and cultic processions, including from one city to another, did occur in Mesopotamia; the differentiation of these from pilgrimage is elaborated in McCorriston 2011, Chapter 5.
- 41 Avner 2002, 163.
- 42 McCorriston *et al.* 2011; 2014.
- 43 Avner 2002, 209.
- 44 Avner 2002; Ben-Tor 2013; Mazar and de Miroschedji 1996.
- 45 McCorriston 2013. I have argued that pilgrimage offerings provide an explanation for the collection of incense from its natural range, far from the South Arabian capitals and their settled occupants.
- 46 McCorriston 2013.
- 47 Sedov 2005, 22.
- 48 Robin and Breton 1982.
- 49 Ghul 1984; Ryckmans 1973, 37.
- 50 Knowles 2006; Maier 2008.
- 51 Armstrong 2006; Heltzer 2007.
- 52 Smith 1997, 44–45.
- 53 E.g., Dever 1990; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001.

- 54 Finkelstein 2012; Na'aman 1997.
- 55 Pioske 2013.
- 56 Burke 2011, 900.
- 57 Mazar 2009, cf. De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012; Finkelstein 2012.
- 58 Pitard 1987.
- 59 Burke 2011, 900.
- 60 Ben-Tor 2013; Zuckerman in Ben-Tor 2013.
- 61 Armstrong 2006, 119; Heltzer 2007, 127; Smith 1997.
- 62 Knowles 2006; Maier 2008.
- 63 Routledge 2000.
- 64 Adan-Bayewitz *et al.* 2008; Meyers and Cahncey 2012, 136; Strange 2011; 915.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 66 Coogan 1974, 109.
- 67 Kirkpatrick 2008, 160–166.
- 68 Smith 1997, 73.
- 69 Routledge 2000, 246.
- 70 Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001, 24.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 24–29.
- 72 Heltzer 2007, 129–130.
- 73 Finkelstein and Perevolotsky 1990, 79.
- 74 Coogan 1974, 93, 100–102; Postgate 2007, 41, 175.
- 75 Coogan 1974, 13, 21.
- 76 Holloway 2002, xviii.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 425.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 425.
- 79 Hall 1985; Ristvet 2011; Van Driel 1969, 165–167.
- 80 McCorriston 2011.
- 81 Haider 2008; Postgate 2007, 205; Van Driel 1969, 36.
- 82 Van Driel 1969, 159–167.
- 83 Smith 1997.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 100–102, 109.

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3 Collective mysteries and Greek pilgrimage

The cases of Eleusis, Thebes and Andania

Inge Nielsen

In what follows I shall treat Greek pilgrimage in the context of the mystery cult.¹ The most famous collective mysteries of antiquity were the ancient Panhellenic Eleusinian mysteries for Demeter and Kore, well known from both written and archaeological sources. Other mysteries were not quite so famous, although of high status. This is the case with the well-documented Samothracian mysteries for the Great Gods, which will be treated by Bonna D. Wescoat in this volume, as well as for the Kabeiroi mysteries on Lemnos, which I shall not discuss here either since both archaeological and written evidence of pilgrimage are lacking. On the other hand, the sanctuary of the Kabeiros mysteries near Thebes, which had regional status, presents valuable archaeological evidence. I shall here concentrate on the Eleusinian and the Theban mysteries, as well as the Andanian mysteries of Messenia which, although the sanctuary has not yet been identified, are well documented, both by Pausanias and by a very informative inscription usually referred to as the sacred law of the Andanian mysteries.

In Greek there is no specific word for pilgrimage, only for the practical journey to and the activities inside the sanctuary in question. Matthew Dillon defines pilgrimage as ‘paying a visit to a sacred site outside the boundaries of one’s own physical environment,’ and adds, ‘any journey undertaken for a specifically religious purpose, and which involved an overnight stay at the pilgrimage centre, can be considered a pilgrimage.’² This definition fits the mysteries well, since we know that a longer stay at the sanctuary was usually required. The same is the case for the definition by Jaś Elsner and Simon Coleman: ‘pilgrimage is not just a journey; it also involves the confrontation of travellers with rituals, holy objects and sacred architecture.’³ Elsner and Ian Rutherford coin the term ‘mini-pilgrimage’ for the procession of the Eleusinian mysteries, and Laura Gawlinski suggests the same for the procession of the Andanian mysteries.⁴ She further rightly stresses that the initiates often travelled a long way to reach the city from which the processions began (in this case Athens, Thebes and Messene). Thus in the following I shall look at the installations that were necessary for the pilgrims who came to be initiated, and/or to participate in the mysteries or initiations. I shall treat three important aspects of pilgrimage: the processions, the entrance(s) to the sanctuary and the installations for the use of the pilgrims.

The processional route to the sanctuary followed by the pilgrims usually took its point of departure in the city with which the sanctuary of the mysteries was

associated. The public procession normally started here, and there were various *stationes* where rituals and sacrifices were performed on the way to the sanctuary. As stressed in the case of Samothrace by Wescoat, the entrance area to the sanctuary held special importance, because it constituted a liminal space between the uninitiated and the initiates. We hear of certain passwords or oaths that had to be given before or at entry, as well as fees which had to be paid.⁵ Public rites, such as sacrifices, were normally celebrated before initiation in an area in front of the entrance. So we must look for suitable spaces in connection with the entrances to the sanctuaries. The installations for those making the pilgrimage were situated outside the *temene* proper. They included places for sleeping, most frequently in the form of tents, which took up some room, but also stoas and hostels. Eating installations could be set up on a temporary basis near the tents, or could take the form of banqueting rooms with standing kitchens or hearths. These must be differentiated from the arrangements made for ritual dining and for the eating of animal offerings, both of which took place inside the sanctuary before and/or after the initiation. Also needed were spaces for ritual cleansing and ablution, whether in the form of wells, cisterns or springs, as well as water for hygienic practices during the stay, often in the form of bath buildings. In the Andania inscription, an area set aside for a market (*agora*) 'in which everything may be sold' is referred to (see below), and this is a general feature in connection with the great religious festivals. We have no information about the formal departure of the initiates.

The Eleusinian mysteries

The Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter and Kore were the oldest, most famous and most prestigious of the Greek collective mysteries.⁶ The structures found in the sanctuary of Eleusis in fact go back to the Mycenaean period, and the mysteries existed well before their introduction is mentioned in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter around 600 BC. We see continuity of cult in the area of the later Telestera from Mycenaean times to the late Roman period.⁷ Written sources inform us about the mysteries and initiations that took place both in Athens and in Eleusis. The sanctuary in Eleusis is well preserved, including the entrance area, which was developed in several distinct phases (Figure 3.1). Near the sanctuary were (partially preserved) housing possibilities, as well as water for ritual ablutions. Preliminary rites were required in Athens, however, well before the main festival in the autumn, since – and this is unique – a prior initiation was needed before an individual was permitted to participate in the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis. These Lesser Mysteries were celebrated during the month of March (Anthesterion) in a sanctuary in Agrai near the Ilissos River in Athens (which unfortunately has not been identified). They included ritual cleansings and fasts and the sacrifice of a piglet, as well as secret rites that may have been performed in the form of readings of sacred texts and the presentation, perhaps also the touching, of sacred objects.⁸ The purpose of these mysteries was to prepare the *mystai* for initiations into the Greater Mysteries. We do not hear of large numbers attending at this time, or of processions in this connection. It seems that initiation into these mysteries was rather an individual matter.

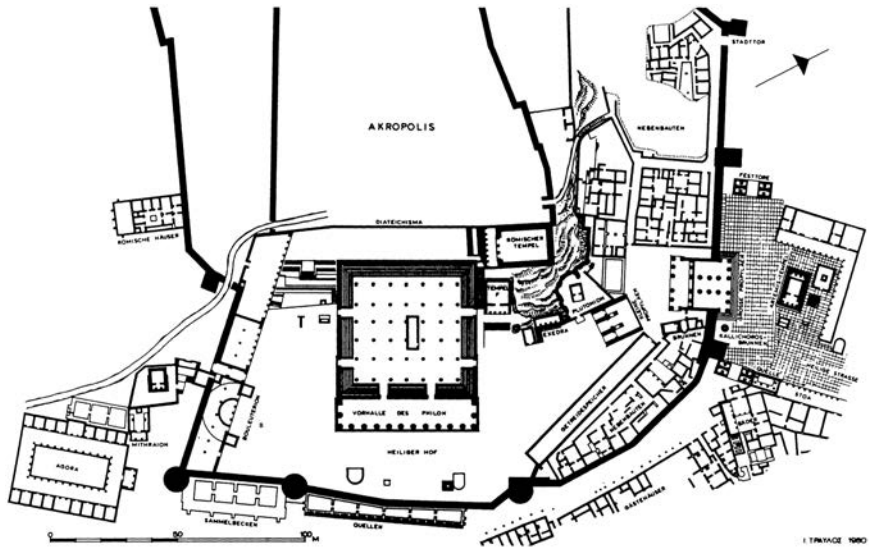


Figure 3.1 Eleusis, general plan of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in the last phase (after Travlos 1988, Abb. 187, © Ernst Wasmuth Verlag Tübingen).

The Greater Mysteries were celebrated primarily in Eleusis in September (Boedromion). The rite lasted for nine days. After undergoing the preliminary initiations of the spring, having completed preparations for the main initiations (including ritual cleansings in the sea near Phaleron both for the *mystes* and for the sacrificial suckling pig), the *mystes* was prepared to be initiated in Eleusis. Much of what occurred during the festival of the Great Mysteries was in fact public. First, the sacred objects were brought to Athens from Eleusis and kept in the great sanctuary for Demeter and Kore called Eleusinion *en astei* (in the city), which has been located above the Agora, just below the Acropolis.⁹ The preserved *peribolos* wall has been dated to the middle of the sixth century BC, so perhaps this sanctuary was built when the mysteries were taken over by or introduced into Athens. Only a small part of the sanctuary along the Panathenaic Way has been excavated, and the existing temple belonging to the early fifth century BC was dedicated to Triptolemos. The main, mystery part of the sanctuary was situated further east, including the temple of Demeter and Kore which housed the *hiera* before the procession.

The procession

The sacred procession set out from this sanctuary on 19 Boedromion, with priests and priestesses carrying the *hiera* in *cistae*, followed by the ephebes. It is worth noting that steps were added at this point along the Panathenaic Way that ran past the sanctuary for the audience attending the procession. For lack of room, it

is possible that the great group of *mystai* first met the procession at the Dipylon gate. The roomy Pompeion (c. 400 BC), with its great courtyard and six banqueting rooms housing 66 *klinai*, may have constituted the meeting place.¹⁰ In the procession, which covered around 22 km and took a whole day, some went on foot, many in carriages. The *stationes* along the way are rather well known; they consisted of various sanctuaries, including that of Apollo Pythios, where various rituals, undoubtedly including offerings, took place. The crossing of water is typical of rites of passage, constituting the crossing from the secular to the sacred. For the crossing of the Rheitoi, two spring-fed ponds, on a narrow footbridge only five feet wide to prevent passage by carts, the *hiera* in the *cistai* were carried by the priestesses on foot: during the procession, they were transported in wagons.¹¹ After the crossing of the bridge, the ritual of the *krokosis* was performed by descendants of the local hero, Krokos, tying saffron-coloured ribbons on the right hand and left leg of the *mystai*. On the bridge over the river Kephisos, near the town of Eleusis, the famous apotropaic rituals called *gephyrismos*, including mockery and obscene gestures at those processing, were performed, as well as a re-enactment of the tale of Iambe from the Eleusinian myth.¹²

It has been suggested that there were in fact two processions, both escorted by the ephebes in full armour part of the way. The one on 19 Boedromion was thus the *pompe* referred to above in which the *hiera* were returned to Eleusis, followed by priests, magistrates and the *mystai*; the other, on 20 Boedromion, escorted the statue of Iakchos – a god partially identified with Dionysos but who played no role in the mysteries proper – to Eleusis. His arrival at Eleusis was celebrated as the Reception of Iakchos. The theory of the existence of two processions, first proposed by Mansfield in an unpublished thesis cited by Clinton, has been discussed by Robertson.¹³ The sources for these two processions are Roman in date, primarily a decree from AD 220 (*IG* II², 1078, lines 18–22 = *I.Eleusis* 638) mentioning that the *hiera* were escorted to Eleusis in a solemn procession by the ephebes on the 19th, while Plutarch (*Phoc.* 28.2–3; *Camillus* 19.6) says that on the 20th the statue of Iakchos is escorted from Athens to Eleusis. Robertson, convincingly, sees the cheerful Iakchos procession as a late addition, since it is only referred to from 480 BC and did not include ritual *stationes*. He suggests that only initiates who were already *epoptai* (witnesses) could participate in this joyous procession, and that the more important procession was the first one. Since the Iakchos procession is not mentioned in the decree, it is possible, but not certain, that it lapsed before AD 220. The first procession has been interpreted as belonging to the original, agrarian part of the cult; the second should then have been added with the later introduction of the mysteries, thus symbolizing the double nature of the festival.

At night, after arrival at Eleusis, dances were performed in honour of the goddesses around the Kallichoron well in the outer court. This arrival of the *mystai* is probably represented on the Ninnion tablet, dating to the fifth/fourth century BC (Figure 3.2).¹⁴ Here the initiands are clad in a *himation* and wear a wreath of myrtle. They carry a stick and a bag, showing that they are travelling to Eleusis, where they would be welcomed by Demeter and Kore: one of the initiands is already dancing. Undoubtedly on this occasion sacrifices were performed on the



Figure 3.2 Ninnion tablet with the arrival of the procession and scenes from the mysteries (WikiMedia Commons) (by DEA / G. Nimatallah / Getty Images).

altars situated in the forecourt of the sanctuary. Clinton suggests convincingly that all sacrifices in connection with the mysteries were, in fact, always celebrated outside the sanctuary, and were public.¹⁵

The entrance

After a day of rest, the initiations into the mysteries (*telete*) took place on 20 and 21 Boedromion in the *temenos*, which was closed to non-initiates (Figure 3.1).

Before entering, the *mystai* were controlled and instructed in what to do, and perhaps given a password. At least from Peisistratos's time, this happened at the northern gate (North Pylon), facing the road to Athens; in 54 BC the North Pylon was built over by the Lesser Propyleia vowed by the consul Appius Claudius. The inspection of the initiates at a later date also took place further north at the Kimonian gate,¹⁶ later in the Antonine period built over by the Greater Propyleia. This means that already in the early Classical period the sanctuary had two gates, both monumentalized by the Romans. How the entrance rites were divided between these two gates is uncertain. This situation may be reflected in the Athenian Eleusinion, since it has been convincingly suggested that the part of the sanctuary now visible – which has a rather simple *propylon* leading from the Sacred Way (at least from the second century BC, the earlier entrance having been on the south side) and including the temple of Triptolemos – constituted only the outer, public part of the sanctuary, a parallel to the forecourt in Eleusis. A propylon in the style of the Inner Propyleia in Eleusis has also been suggested (based on finds of fragments of Karyatids in the sanctuary and a Doric frieze with Eleusinian cultic objects) for the Eleusinion in Athens, leading from the public to the secret part of the sanctuary (indicated also by Pausanias, 1.14.3–4), where only those initiated into the mysteries had access and where the *hiera* were kept, undoubtedly in the (not preserved) temple for Demeter and Kore.¹⁷

The discussion of whether or not the mysteries originally belonged to Eleusis and were taken over by Athens only later, around 600 BC or even as late as the Peisistratid period, has also involved the architecture of the sanctuary. An early entrance oriented towards Athens, to the north, would support an early connection, while an entrance oriented to the harbour to the south-east would rather indicate an original connection with Eleusis.¹⁸

The earliest phase identified beneath the present Telesterion includes a *megaron* temple type (the so-called Megaron B), oriented to the east and dating to the Mycenaean period. From this perspective, Eleusis demonstrates continuity extending back to the Late Bronze Age, as is also evident from the recent results published by Cosmopoulos, showing that the Megaron B complex was still in use in the Geometric period, when it was supported by a rounded terrace wall.¹⁹ In the late Geometric period (c. 750 BC), the sacred area was furnished with a new terrace wall and was reached via a rather monumental staircase of seven steps from the south. A sacred hearth and terracotta figurines were found in front of this terrace/*peribolos* wall by the entrance. A well found here could indicate that the original dancing ritual at the Kallichoron well in fact took place in this area.²⁰ That the sanctuary was originally reached from the south-east is also indicated by the placement of the contemporary Sacred House, just outside the later fourth-century BC wall by the South Gate.

Of great interest also is the configuration of the site in the early Archaic period. An important building phase at the end of the seventh century BC included the enlargement of the Geometric period terrace towards south and east by the addition of an impressive terrace wall, including, on a part of its south side, a stepped orthostate zone placed near the entrance. These steps were probably used for standing on while viewing the procession coming from the south. One

may compare this layout with the Eleusinion in Athens, where steps of this kind later flanked the Sacred Way. A forecourt was laid out outside the new terrace wall (which probably also functioned as a *peribolos* wall), so that this court was situated outside the sanctuary and its southern entrance. In this court an altar to the west, a well to the north-east and a stepped podium facing it to the east were situated. The podium had three steps, constituting a kind of *theatron* meant for worshippers watching the rituals taking place in this forecourt. The well, which like the court was older, has been identified with the Kallichoron well, mentioned in the Hymn of Demeter as situated below the temple. Around this well in the public part of the festival, sacred dances were performed on a kind of *choros* or orchestra, and sacrifices performed at the altar.²¹

Around 600 BC, this new and monumental complex was crowned by the so-called Solonian Temple, a rectangular structure ($24 \times 14 \text{ m} = 336 \text{ m}^2$) built on an enlarged terrace. The placement of the entrance to the temple is uncertain. Like Mylonas, Sourvinou-Inwood places the entrance on the long east side facing the triangular court, thus establishing continuity with the Geometric sanctuary, but there is no proof of this emplacement.²² An entrance on the short north side, as suggested by Travlos (who reconstructs an *adyton* facing it), would be in accordance with a 'normal' temple of this period.²³ The problem is that in fact we do not know what kind of temple Demeter preferred, and the later temples and Telesteria never resembled a 'normal' temple. Also, their main entrance with three doors, a *prostoon* and steps kept facing east, although the main entrance to the sanctuary now certainly faced Athens to the north (North Pylon). In addition, the altars were probably always placed on the terrace facing the temple to the east. We do not know whether the 'Solonian' temple was already used for initiations and mystery assemblies, but its size would certainly allow for such a use. When Peisistratos built his new *peribolos* wall with the main propylon facing north, he destroyed the southern court and made the well and the podium unusable, although he did reverently keep the altar in a niche in his new *peribolos* wall.

There is thus no doubt that the earliest main entrance faced south-east, towards the harbour, and that the first known gate to the north is the North Pylon in Peisistratos's new Eleusis city wall. At this time, a new forecourt and a new 'Kallichoron' well were installed here, facing the end of the Sacred Way from Athens, together with a new altar and a temple. Perhaps this forecourt was called a threshing floor since, in connection with the temple of Artemis Propyleia, Pausanias (1.38.6–7) mentions a temple of Triptolomos in the Rharian plains as well as an altar which was near this floor. However, a more convincing placement for this threshing floor, which existed much earlier and is referred to in an inscription dating to 329/8 BC as lying inside the sanctuary, has been suggested by Vanderpool.²⁴ He suggests that the threshing floor was always a central element in the sanctuary and situates it in the open area in front of the temple/*telesterion*. As we have seen, this area took the form of a rounded area already from the early Archaic period (or even earlier), and was further enlarged in the Peisistratid period. Already in Homer Demeter is described as a goddess who 'amid driving blasts of wind separates the grain from

the chaff.²⁵ Wescoat has compared this configuration to the round *theatron* by the propylon in Samothrace, pointing out the likeness to a threshing floor, also used for round dancing.²⁶

The architectural context of pilgrimage at Eleusis

Installations for the housing of the pilgrims and *mystai* must always have existed. At first they were probably situated in the town of Eleusis, on the hill or by the harbour, but as the sanctuary expanded, the area along the *temenos* wall to the east between the old South Gate and the new North Gate was included for this purpose as well, filling up with hostels and water installations, including baths, wells and cisterns. In their present state most of these installations belong to the Roman Imperial period, but an indication that this area was also used for accommodation in the earlier period is the ruin of a third-century BC Greek-style *balaneion*, furnished with the typical two rotundas found beneath a Roman bath. Other installations were crowded around the northern forecourt, which in its present Roman state measured 65 × 40 m (Figure 3.1). At least from the time of the building of the North Gate, this area included not only the newly built Kallichoron well, but also an apsidal temple excavated near the Roman temple of Artemis and dating to the sixth century BC; the Roman *eschara* nearby undoubtedly had a predecessor. In the Roman period, two commemorative arches crossing the roads from the harbour (to the south-east) and from Megara (to the north-west) were added. In the general area to the north where the Sacred Way entered the court, various structures have been traced, among them a large rectangular building that has tentatively been identified as a *pompeion*. At least two stoas flanked the court, one to the east and one, with rooms, to the north-west, which may have been used for banquets for important pilgrims. For ablutions, a monumental fountain was installed on the south-east side, behind which Roman baths were built.

The Kabeiros mysteries in Thebes

These Boeotian mysteries are much less well known than the Eleusinian ones, and are very seldom mentioned in the written sources.²⁷ They were of regional rather than Panhellenic importance, centred upon the Boeotian capital, Thebes, but could also be reached from other towns nearby, Thespiiai being the most important. The gods in question were Kabeiros and his young son, Pais, and they were closely related to Demeter Kabeireia, who was worshipped with mysteries in a grove nearby. It is uncertain when the cult of Kabeiros and Pais acquired a mystery cult. Primarily young men were probably initiated in this sanctuary, since many statuettes of youths have been found there and Pais was a young god; but from the written sources it is clear that all manner of people, including women and slaves, could be initiated. A more significant site for the initiation of women may have been the nearby sanctuary of Demeter, however. The Kabeiros sanctuary is quite well preserved, but although the finds go back to the Geometric period, the structures are rather late, beginning around 500 BC (Figure 3.3). The sanctuary

the Kabeirion. Pausanias records that he is not allowed to reveal which *dromena* were celebrated for the Kabeiroi and the Mother, and tells us that Demeter was in fact the initiatrix of the Kabeiros mysteries. The Kabeiroi, or rather Kabeiros, was a wine god, worshipped together with the youth, Pais. Both are depicted on a Kabeirian *kantharos* dating to 410–400 BC, and on one fragment, dated 350–325 BC, a reclining Kabeiros is seen receiving travellers and participants bringing a bull (Figure 3.4a), while two such vases show a group of people with sacrificial animals (a bull and a boar respectively), one of them accompanied by a flute player, reaching a sacred space guarded by ithyphallic Pan-herms which probably symbolizes the entrance to the sanctuary (Figures 3.4b–3.4c).²⁸ Another famous vase shows a procession with a wagon carrying a young couple, led by musicians (Figure 3.4d).²⁹

The entrance

The main entrance to the sanctuary, from an early date, was from the north, where it was easiest to enter the sanctuary valley from the Tenerian plain coming from Thebes. In the early Hellenistic period this entrance was monumentalized and consisted of a Propylon Gate that led to a now lost staircase accessing the centre of the sanctuary above the terrace wall. This entrance continued to be used until the mysteries lapsed. Another entrance was probably reached from the south and led to a kind of rough forecourt flanked by stoas. Heyder and Mallwitz (1978, 64) suggest that this area might constitute the end of a procession route from Thespiiai. Coming from the east, this route first followed the South Stoa, then turned towards the north and, following the West Stoa, reached the monumental staircase leading to the sanctuary.

We have some information from inscriptions from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. One inscription refers to a *prothyron* that, as part of the entrance complex, was paid for by income from the mysteries. We also hear that there was a college of two hereditary priests, as well as a college of two to three *kabiriarchai*, public officials. Interesting is the inscription, which lists the 12 *paragogeis*, who probably collected the entrance fee or *paragogeion* from those who were to be initiated. Entrance tokens to the Kabeirion have in fact been found.³⁰ Since there was not much room around the rather small northern propylon, it is highly likely that in the Hellenistic period the southern area flanking the sanctuary was added to house the growing number of pilgrims and initiands at the great feasts. Perhaps the Sacred Way from Thebes then led from the northern propylon, along the stream flanking the sanctuary to the west, following the back of the West Stoa, until reaching a cistern where it was possible to enter the southern court, flanked by porticos. There is a paved area in front of the cistern, but whether or not it reached the west hall and thereby constituted a kind of entrance is uncertain. After crossing the open space, one reached a monumental staircase with originally eight steps and a width of 11.50 m at a maximum. This staircase is in fact more impressive than the northern one and led down to the centre of the sanctuary, with temple and platform facing the theatre. This staircase, however, lost its importance when the columnar façade wall to the temple was built in the late Hellenistic period, although it continued to function in a limited way.



a



b



c



d

Figures 3.4a–d Thebes, drawings from three Kabeirian *kantharoi*, a: Kabeiros reclining receives intiands; b and c: the arrival of intiands to the sanctuary with sacrificial animals, and a herm marking the entrance to the sanctuary; d: a procession scene (after Wolters and Bruns 1940, a: Taf. 6, b: Abb. 4, c: Taf. 33.2, d: Taf. 33.1).

The architectural context of pilgrimage to the Kabeirion

According to the 1978 publication of the excavations by Heyder and Mallwitz, the area to the south of the sanctuary was gradually developed into a closed courtyard, or rather, since it is not horizontal, a kind of processional way in which a reservoir and some wells were already situated. In their period III (275–200 BC), the South Stoa ($38 \times 7/6.2$ m), situated 4.50 m higher than the later-added West Stoa, was built to support the raised area to the south. This has been only partly excavated. In the next phase, IVA (200–125 BC), we see the addition of another cistern which, together with the new West Stoa (6.75×36.90 m), flanked the by-now marked entrance of the Sacred Way to the south-west. The monumental stairway to the sanctuary proper also belongs to this period. In Period V (50 BC to AD 100), the last open side of the area was closed by the strange 4.60-metre-wide East Hall which, unlike the other halls, was perhaps closed; but it has only been partially excavated. Its level falls by no less than 4 m at a length of 27.80 m from south to north. In fact this formed a kind of corridor or viaduct, perhaps leading to the coeval *cavea* of the theatre and to the old sanctuary above to the east. In the final period VI (AD 100–400), great changes took place, probably in connection with the plundering by the Herulians in AD 276. All the halls were destroyed by fire, and only the West Stoa was restored with *spolia* and rooms added to the back, most of which could be reached only from the west, probably flanking a terrace or road along the stream.

The functions of these structures are uncertain, and have not been of great interest to scholars. It is clear, however, that the many water installations indicate that there may have been bathing and living here for some time. The halls were rather narrow and probably not used for market stands. The South Stoa consisted of one large hall, while the West Stoa was divided in three, with two square rooms at the ends, a form which, in combination with the water conduits, could indicate banqueting here. In general these two long halls would be suitable for sleeping and banqueting. The East Hall, or corridor, could only be reached from the South Stoa, and could probably also be used for sleeping. As mentioned, a function as processional viaduct to the theatre has also been suggested. The rooms added to the West Stoa (the only remaining one after the Herulian destruction) and facing away from the court could have been used, for example, as shops, while the central, large broad-room would be suitable for banquets. The hall itself had two aisles and thus more room. The flanking square rooms, probably for banquets, remained in use. A great quantity of eating and cooking ware from the Hellenistic period was found here. During the Roman period its place was taken by fine glass ware, indicating the importance of banqueting also in this period.

The mysteries of Andania

These very ancient mysteries were reborn after a long period of oblivion in connection with the liberation of Messenia from Spartan rule by the Theban Epaminondas in 379 BC and the founding of the new capital Messene.³¹ The mysteries were reorganized once more by Mnasiistratos in 92/91 BC, and it is this change

which is recorded by the famous inscription.³² As was the case with the Eleusinian mysteries, this sacred law of the Andanian mysteries describes preparations probably taking place in Messene prior to the yearly mystery festival in late August/September in the Karnasian grove, about 1.5 km outside the town of Andania, the former capital of Messenia. Sacred books and objects formed part of these rites, and according to Pausanias (4.26.8) it was the most important mystery cult after Eleusis, which, according to tradition, had gradually come to overshadow it. As in the Eleusinian cult, the main deities were Demeter and Kore (Megalai Theai), and the secret rites took place in the sacred Karnasian cypress grove, which included a spring as well as statues of Apollo Karneios, Hagne (who according to Pausanias was identified with Kore) and Hermes.³³ However, the sacred law only mentions Megaloi Theoi, the Great Gods. An identification with the Theban Kabeiroi has been suggested, since a certain Methapos was active in both mystery cults according to Pausanias (4.1.7–9), as well as with the Dioskouroi, since they were often associated with the Kabeiroi. This identification may, as suggested by Gawlinski,³⁴ be supported by the presence of a sanctuary just west of the Asklepieion and south of the Agora of Messene, which Petros Themelis has identified as the sanctuary for Demeter and the Dioskouroi mentioned by Pausanias (4.31.9). Perhaps this sanctuary was in fact the starting point for the procession. However, there are indications that the sanctuary was not dedicated to Demeter at all; thus Müth has suggested that Demeter and Kore were worshipped together elsewhere in Messene, seeing no connection with the Andanian mysteries.³⁵ In the Karnasian grove, a temple for the Great Gods and altars for all the deities worshipped here are referred to as well as treasuries (probably in the form of offering boxes), as is a spring which has been tentatively identified with the Divari spring visible today. This is situated in the plain in the general area of the village Konstantinoi and the church of Aghioi Konstantinoi on which the inscription was sited; this town has been tentatively identified with Andania.³⁶ From the inscription we hear of more than one initiation grade,³⁷ and these mysteries were open to all who had the means to pay for them, for the fees were very high and the clothes needed, which are described in detail in the inscription, were costly as well. All the same, slaves too could be initiated.

The procession

The procession undoubtedly led from Messene to the Karnasian grove, some 16 km from Andania, and surely included various *stationes*. Pausanias in fact took the same route when visiting the sanctuary (4.33.3). Although not mentioned by him, the triple bridge (probably built in the middle of the second century BC at the latest) crossing the Balyra River at a point where two streams unite with it must surely have played an important role in the procession as a *statio*.³⁸ Thereafter the route led into the Stenyklaros plain, on the northern part of which the sanctuary was situated. The procession is described in detail in the inscription, where the 'sacred,' meaning undoubtedly already initiated, men and women and young girls (*hieroi*, *hiereia* and *parthenoi/paides*), likely chosen from the higher circles of the

citizens of Messene, played a great role. I cite the passage in question (§ 6 lines 28–34), in Marvin Meyer's translation:

regarding the procession: In the procession Mnasistratos is to lead the way, then comes the priest of the gods whose mysteries are being held, together with the priestess, then the director of the games, the priests of the sacrifices, and the flute players. After them the sacred virgins, as they are assigned by lot, draw the carts bearing the chests that contain the sacred things of the mysteries: then come the mistress of the banquet for the worship of Demeter and the assistants who have begun their duties, then the priestess of Demeter of the Hippodrome, then the priestess of Demeter in Aigila. Then come the sacred women, one by one, as assigned by lot, then the sacred men, as assigned by the council of ten. The supervisor of the women is to appoint by lot the sacred women and the virgins and is to be careful that they take their places in the procession as assigned by lot. Animals for sacrifice are to be led in the procession, and they are to be sacrificed: a pregnant pig for Demeter, a ram for Hermes, a young pig for the Great Gods, a boar for Apollo Karneios, a sheep for Hagna.

As for *agones*, there is no proof that these took place during the mysteries, as they are indicated by two participants in the procession, the *agonothetes* (line 29) and the priestess of Demeter of the Hippodrome (line 31). As Gawlinski argues, these officials may likely only have been guests.³⁹

The entrance

On reaching the sanctuary, but before the initiations themselves, purification rituals were performed, as was canonical in mysteries. In §12 this is specified thus:

This is what must be provided before the opening of the mysteries: two white lambs; at the rite of purification, a ram with a fine colour; when one is purified in the theatre, three piglets; for the first initiates, one hundred lambs.

This may mean that after the procession had reached the sanctuary but before the initiations, rites of purification could be performed in the theatre as well as, probably, at altars in the sanctuary. Thereafter the sacred meal took place (lines 95–99), with officials and musicians as guests, but apparently not the initiates. The question is whether the theatre mentioned in connection with the purifications was actually situated in the sanctuary or perhaps rather in Messene, in which case the purification rites must have taken place before the procession. The dances, however, accompanied by professional musicians, were presumably performed in the sanctuary, and this would have favoured a cultic theatre there.⁴⁰ As Graf suggests, it is possible that the fixed number of lambs to be sacrificed by the initiands limited these to no more than 100 at each festival.⁴¹ Probably at the entrance, at the beginning of the initiations into the mysteries, a wreathing ceremony took place; thus

when the 'sacred men' gave a signal, the first-time initiates (*protomystai*) must take off the tiaras they had previously worn and be wreathed with laurel (lines 14–15). Also in connection with the entrance to a fenced-in area with tents only for the initiated, purity rituals in the form of ablutions at basins in front of the entrance took place (line 36).

The architectural context of pilgrimage at Andania

The pilgrims and initiands were to stay in tents, and here too the rules are specific:

Regarding tents. The sacred men are not to allow anyone to have a tent larger than thirty feet square or to put curtains or screens around the tents; nor is anyone not of the sacred men to have a tent within the area that the sacred men mark off. No uninitiated person is to go into the area they mark off. They are also to set out vessels for water. They also are to record publicly from what one must be pure and what one must not have in order to enter.

(§ 71, lines 34–37)

The question is what went on in this area set apart for the initiated; rather than the initiations themselves, a sacred meal or something similar requiring a high degree of purity is probable, as suggested by Gawlinski.⁴² Paragraph 8 (lines 37–38) states: 'What one must not have in the tents. No one is to have in the tent couches or silver plate worth more than 300 *drachmai*.' There is no mention of standing accommodation, and even the rich initiands slept in tents whose size and luxury were restricted. This camp was undoubtedly situated very close to the sanctuary. Of special importance here is the rather detailed account of the bathhouse and its functions in the inscription (lines 106–111). This bath-building (*loutron*) was situated inside the sanctuary although clearly used exclusively for hygienic purposes. It seems to have been a rather impressive building, probably of the Greek *balaneion* type, with a communal *makra* pool with warm water (a luxury) and probably also *pyeloi*, hip-baths.⁴³ Also of great interest is the description of the rules for the market (*agora*; § 201, lines 99–103) set up to serve the pilgrims.

Conclusion

In connection with the three chosen mysteries of Eleusis, Thebes and Andania, we thus do have a certain amount of information about pilgrimage as defined by most scholars. This has been recovered by putting together what we may glean both from written sources and from the archaeological installations related to the sanctuaries. Although most scholars have concentrated on what happened *during* the mysteries, the many activities and public rituals connected with the preparations and the processions, the activities at the entrance area and the construction of facilities for the stay of a great many pilgrims and initiates did in fact constitute a very considerable task for the cities in question. On the other hand, these events of course also brought in a great deal of income both to the city and to the sanctuary,

as well as for the sanctuary service personnel and priests, not to speak of the many merchants who brought their goods to the markets which always constituted an important part of religious festivals, in Antiquity as today.

Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the mysteries and their sanctuaries in general, see latest Nielsen 2014.
- 2 Dillon 1997, xviii.
- 3 Coleman and Elsner 1995, 6. For the problem of defining pilgrimage, see also the introduction by Friese and Kristensen in this volume. In connection with her treatment of the Andanian mysteries, Gawlinski (2012, 48) stresses the practical and ritual challenges connected with pilgrimage:

Pilgrimage creates a special problem for Greek ritual: it is necessary for the sanctuary to keep itself clean and pure, but at the same time it must allow for real people to carry on their day-to-day activities, many of them dirty and potentially polluting. The visitors come in all at once and camp for several days, needing of course to eat, sleep, go to the bathroom, and clean themselves. This is where a facility like the bathhouse comes into play.
- 4 Eleusis: Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 15. Andania: Gawlinski 2012, 52.
- 5 See latest Nielsen 2014, 200ff with literature.
- 6 There is an enormous literature on these mysteries: Clinton 1988; 1993; 2003; Kerényi 1962; Mylonas 1961; Nielsen 2014; Noack 1927; Robertson 1998; Sourvinou-Inwood 2003; Travlos 1970; 1988, to mention only the most important in this connection. For the written sources, see also the collection by Clinton 2005–2008; Meyer 1987, 15ff.
- 7 Cosmopoulos 2014.
- 8 For the Lesser Mysteries and the pertinent written sources, see Bremmer 2014, 3; Clinton 2003.
- 9 For this sanctuary, see Miles 1998.
- 10 Suggested by Mylonas 1961, 252. For the Pompeion, see Mylonas 1961; Travlos 1971, 477–481 with literature.
- 11 *IG I³ 79 = I. Eleusis* 41, from 422/1 BC.
- 12 See for a description of this huge procession, Hdt. 8.65; *Ar. Ran.* 311–459; Paus. 1.36–39. Cf. Mylonas 1961, 252–258, and Robertson 1998, who includes the important epigraphic material. For these inscriptions, see latest Clinton 2005–2008. For the *gephyrismos* ritual, see Hesychios, s.v. *gephusis-gephuristai*; Strabo 9.1.24. This bridge over the Kephisos River was rebuilt in the Hellenistic period and monumentalized by Hadrian.
- 13 Clinton 1988; Robertson 1998.
- 14 For this famous tablet, see Clinton 1992.
- 15 Clinton 1988.
- 16 This was probably identical with the Propylon of Demeter and Kore mentioned in a fourth century BC inscription: *Sylloge*, vol. 3 no. 956, 1. 25. Cf. Clinton 1988, n. 12 for a discussion of this Kimonian extension and its date.
- 17 For this, see Miles 1998, 50–52, 61–62 and 89–90 (the fragments indicating an Inner Propylon like the one in Eleusis).
- 18 See Clinton 1993; Mylonas 1961, 103–105; Robertson 1998, 547–557; Sourvinou-Inwood 1997.
- 19 Cosmopoulos 2014. According to these new insights, the Megaron B complex with the altar/platform in front of the Megaron, the traces of burned pig offerings coming from there and the existence of a *peribolos* wall with entrance from the north, indicate a cultic use from the beginning (LH IIB), continuing, with a change of offering ritual to sacrificial pyres, into the Geometric period.

- 20 Mazarakis Ainian 1997, 147ff.
- 21 For this court and its monuments, see Mylonas 1961, 71–73. I am grateful to Bonna D. Wescoat for referring me to this stepped podium.
- 22 Mylonas 1961; Sourvinou-Inwood 1997.
- 23 Travlos 1988.
- 24 *IG II²* 1672, line 233 = *I. Eleusis* 177; Vanderpool 1982.
- 25 Hom., *Il.* 5.499–504 (trans. T. Murray).
- 26 Wescoat 2012.
- 27 For the sanctuary, see Heyder and Mallwitz 1978. Finds in the sanctuary including the famous *kantharoi* have been published by Wolters and Bruns 1940. The results of these excavations have been discussed critically by Schachter, latest in 2003. For the mysteries, see also Dumas 1997. Cf. Nielsen 2014.
- 28 See Wolters and Bruns 1940, Taf. 44,1 and a: p. 106f. Taf. 6.
- 29 See *Ibid.*, b: p. 101, K. 26 Abb. 4; c: p. 101, K. 25, Taf. 33.2; d: p. 108, M. 6, Taf. 3.1.
- 30 *Prothyron: Ibid.*, 27, 4: *IG* 7, 2420, 1477. *Kabiriarchai: IG* 7, 2428, 2420; *Paragogeies: IG* 7, 2428. Entrance tokens: *Journal International d'archeologie numismatique* 18, 1916/1917, 114. Cf. Schachter 2003, 118f n. 8.
- 31 For an interpretation of the feast and the mysteries, see also Bremmer 2014, 86–96; Gawlinski 2012; Graf 2003.
- 32 *Syll.*³ 736/*IG*. V.1.1390. Cf. Meyer 1987, 51–59, and latest Gawlinski 2012. Recently, this date has been challenged by P. Themelis (2007) who now dates it to AD 23/24. For a discussion of these dates, see latest Gawlinski 2012, 3–11, who defends the original date.
- 33 Paus. 4.26.8, treating the origin of the cult and the sacred books, and 4.33.4–5, describing the cult and the Karnasian grove and the deities worshipped there. The important place taken by Hermes may be compared with the central role played by Hermes/Kasmos in the mysteries of the Great Gods in Samothrace.
- 34 Gawlinski 2012, 21, with literature. She also refers to the *piloi* worn by the sacred men and women in the Andanian mysteries as a support of the identity of the Dioskouroi with the Great Gods.
- 35 Muth 2007, 132–142 and 139, n. 809, for a connection to the Andania mysteries, in contrast to Themelis 1998.
- 36 Andania, situated at the northern edge of the Messenian plain, was originally a *polis* and probably the most important city in Messenia before 379 BC, when this role was taken over by Messene. At the time when the inscription was made, Andania was probably only a small *nome* dependent on Messene. For the arguments for the identification of Andania, the spring and the Karnasian grove, see most recently Gawlinski 2012, 33–41.
- 37 The *protomystai* were to be initiated for the first time, and *hoi teloumenoi* to be initiated in a higher grade (lines 14, 50, 68). Compare the *mystai* and the *epoptai* in Eleusis, Lemnos and Samothrace.
- 38 Compare the importance of the Rhoikoi footbridge and the bridge over the Kephisos River in the Eleusinian procession. Cf. Gawlinski 2012, 53–57 for the Andanian processional way.
- 39 Gawlinski 2012, 47. Also in other mystery sanctuaries, the installation of *agones* did not necessarily mean that these activities took place during the mysteries (compare the sanctuary of Eleusis and the *rite de passage* sanctuary at Brauron).
- 40 For cultic theatres in sanctuaries, including mystery sanctuaries like Eleusis, see Nielsen 2002. As for the dancing, one may compare with the dancing by the Kallichoron well just outside the *temenos* of Eleusis.
- 41 Graf 2003.
- 42 Gawlinski 2012, 147.
- 43 Also anointment is mentioned, as is the price and the time for the use of the bath. Clearly this bath-building was used also outside the mystery celebrations, since the sanctuary was an important one. For this bath-building see the useful treatment in Gawlinski 2012,

223–226, with references. Although hygienic installations were normally situated outside the sanctuaries, as was the case in Eleusis (see above), they could also be found in the sanctuaries themselves. This is, for instance, the case with one of the best preserved and finest furnished *balaneia*, that in Gortys in Arcadia, situated in a sanctuary of Asklepios, as was the case with a bath-building in Epidauros, while the baths in Oropos belonged to the sanctuary of Amphiphaeos. For *balaneia* in general, see Ginouvés 1962.

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4 Of piety, gender and ritual space

An archaeological approach to women's sacred travel in Greece

Wiebke Friese

And since both the indoor and the outdoor tasks demand labour and attention, God from the first adapted the woman's nature, I think, to the indoor and man's to the outdoor tasks and cares. For he made the man's body and mind more capable of enduring cold and heat, and journeys and campaigns; and therefore imposed on him the outdoor tasks. To the woman, since he has made her body less capable of such endurance, I take it that God has assigned the indoor tasks.¹

For many decades, research dealing with gender in antiquity was based primarily on the analysis of iconographical and literary material.² In that context, the cited text from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (Οἰκονομικός), written in the third century BC, in which the Athenian nobleman Ischomachus teaches his wife the different tasks of men and women, was frequently cited.³ The ancient author stresses that a gendered division between indoors and outdoors is part of a natural God-given order. Based on this, modern scholars have assumed that ancient Greek society was organized by clear binary principles such as *oikos* and *polis*, private and public, nature and culture, and male and female.⁴ In the domestic area, it was long implied that women were bound to the 'private' space of the *gynaikōn* (women's quarter) while the men took care of their affairs in the *andrōn* (men's quarter) or in the 'public' space of the agora.⁵ Consequently, archaeologists structured the typical Greek courtyard house by men's and women's wings.⁶ It was virtually inconceivable that women might have left their homes to travel.⁷

In the last three decades, however, this view has been put into perspective. It has become evident that views of women's everyday life in antiquity were obscured not only by the general shortfall of evidence connectable to a female context, but also by the mediating voice of male authors and by the general difficulties inherent in reconstructing space and performance from written texts. Among others, B. Goff and M. Dillon investigated women's roles in ancient Greek religion,⁸ R. Brock pointed out that Athenian women had an active role also in economic activities and J. Scheidel was able to show that women whose families relied on agriculture had to help their men in the fields on a regular basis.⁹ While most critique is still based on literary evidence, using material culture only as a technical tool, J. B. Connelly has emphasized the iconographical material and, in particular, L. Nevett

has evaluated the archaeological material so as to recalibrate our understanding of gendered space in the domestic and civic sphere.¹⁰ Investigating the houses of Olynthus and the urban landscape of Athens, she was able to demonstrate that a clearly demarcated development of gendered function is not traceable, and that women were indeed frequently present outside the domestic sphere.¹¹

So far, research has considered the question of gendered space outside the civic sphere only incidentally. Working on extra-urban sanctuaries related to festivals and contests, J. Mylonopoulos addressed this issue of gendered religious space, stating that ritual space *per se* is always ‘gender-neutral.’¹² But it was not only to take part in local or Panhellenic celebrations that women left their homes. For the sake of their own health and that of their families, single women travelled long distances in order to be initiated in eschatological mystery cults or to seek the help of oracular or healing deities; women of the same *deme* also gathered together in suburban sanctuaries to the goddess Demeter for a couple of days to celebrate the Thesmophoria, strictly forbidden to men.¹³ Focusing on the archaeological material of two very different case-studies – the healing sanctuary of Epidauros and the *Thesmophorion* of Gela – as well as the epigraphic evidence of the mystery sanctuary of Andania, the present paper aims to investigate female agency and movement beyond the settlements so as to reconstruct a topography of women on sacred journeys in ancient Greece.¹⁴ The geographical aspects of space and movement (destination, length and method of travel, female attendance inside the sanctuaries) will be considered as much as those of chronology (frequency and duration of travelling and stay) and liminality (movement through the ritual space of a sanctuary).

Terminology

‘Space’ as well as ‘gender’ are cultural concepts which always react flexibly to contemporary human society. Consequently, no terminology can be final or conclusive. Following B. Goff, the term ‘gender’ in this paper basically refers to the sex distinction between male and female, which in ancient Greece was highly limiting for the social and political sphere.¹⁵ The term ‘ritual space’ here should be understood as the spatial frame for a particular ritual. It therefore incorporates open space and inner space, as well as the framing architecture both on the road and inside a *temenos*.¹⁶

Concerning the general concept of ‘space,’ K. Gilhuly and N. Worman have recently summarized that ‘ancient Greek terminology seems just as unstable as modern geographical discourse, since there is an considerable overlap and fluidity in the usage of such terms as *topos* (place), *chôros* (space) and *chôra* (countryside).’¹⁷ Moreover, whether open, inner or framed, space can be taken over by various natural or human activities at different times; the use and perception of one and the same site or building may vary depending on the socio-economic status of users, as well as on (temporary) activity taking place inside.¹⁸ In assigning a particular topography, architecture, votives or cult equipment if possible only to women or to men, this paper aims to reconstruct the presence and performance of women on their way to, as well as inside, ancient Greek extra-urban sanctuaries. In so doing, it also addresses potential differences in movement, agency and space between male and female, secular and sacred, and urban and extra-urban.

The case-studies

The Asklepieion of Epidauros

Both women and men visited a sanctuary of the healing god Asclepius for very obvious reasons: for their own health, or for that of a very close relative. To this purpose they might travel long distances. Asclepius's oldest and most famous sanctuary, Epidauros, was situated on the eastern coast of the Argolis, about a day's journey by ship from Piraeus. In ancient times this route was frequently used and well protected, so the journey was relatively comfortable and safe. However, the *iamata* – the stone steles bearing the 'official' records of successful cures erected from at least the fourth century inside the *temenos* of Epidauros – attest that individual pilgrims (*hiketai*) came from all over the Hellenistic world. These journeys might well have been rather more exhausting, even dangerous.¹⁹ In addition to these regular visits for healing reasons, Epidauros was also the destination of a more 'official' pilgrimage (*theória*). Every five years the Epidaurians invited befriended poleis to send legations to take part in the Epidauria festival, which contained musical as well as sportive competitions.²⁰ These delegations travelled in groups. Garlands clearly marked them as *theóroi* and they were protected by the sacred peace (*ekecheiria*).²¹ They gathered in the harbour, and on the first day of the festival they walked on foot in procession along the 'sacred way' (Figure 4.1) leading from the settlement to the sanctuary of Asclepius, which was situated about 9 km inland.²² According to I. Rutherford, 'sacred way usually meant a



Figure 4.1 Epidauros. Propylon and sacred way in the back.

Photo: Troels Myrup Kristensen.

processional route linking a city and a neighbouring sanctuary . . . or simply approaching a major sanctuary.⁷ At Epidauros, this would mean that both *theóroi* and *hikétai* used the same paved road, the former in a ceremonial procession on a particular day, the latter alone or in small groups the whole year round.²³ While isolated female *theóroi* are known in the context of other local festivals, such as the Olympia of Ephesos, it is unlikely that women took part in the Panhellenic Epidauria.²⁴ Thus in what follows only the performance and movement of the *hiketai* should be considered.

Of the 48 extant *iamata* found in the sanctuary, 13 relate to women and four to children.²⁵ It was hardly unusual, therefore, for women to travel to Epidauros, even alone. Similar evidence is described for other Asklepieia. In his *mimiambus*, Herondas describes two women entering Asclepius's temple on Cos, admiring the artworks inside the *adyton* and leaving sacrifices for the god. They obviously visited the Asklepieion without their families, as one of them promises 'may we come again in full health once more bringing larger offerings, and our husbands and children with us.'²⁶ Many female visitors to the healing sanctuaries, however, suffered from more or less debilitating illnesses, for which reason, like their male fellow-sufferers, they were probably accompanied by relatives or slaves to assist them.²⁷ On the whole, the general circumstances of a particular journey probably owed more to the health and wealth of a traveller than to his or her sex.

The sanctuary of Epidauros was first established in the fifth and subsequently underwent major reorganization in the fourth century BC (Figure 4.2).²⁸ The 'sacred way' ended in front of a monumental *propylon* (21), marking the official entrance.²⁹ Somewhere in the vicinity of the *propylon* a sacred law was positioned, stating that persons about to die or to give birth might not enter.³⁰ Passing the *propylon*, the worshippers were admonished to wash in a sacred well before they were allowed to enter the main *temenos*. Their next intention must have been to find a place for the night. Many pilgrims stayed in Epidauros for a couple of days or even weeks. Some consulted the god more than once, while others stayed for medical treatment or just for pleasure (at least during festival times).³¹ Depending on their resources, they stayed in tents or hostels, used the baths, visited the theatre and feasted in the dining rooms and with them their relatives and slaves.³² The Epidaurian *temenos* must have been a busy place all year round.

After washing in the well, the worshippers entered a large courtyard flanked by the 'Kotys *stoa*' on the north side (17) (probably used as a *katagogeion* or hostel).³³ To the east, an older, smaller bath and two earlier fountain houses were built over by the larger north-eastern bath complex (16) in the second century AD. The west side was flanked by a Hellenistic *stoa*, later integrated into a Roman bath complex (13).³⁴ Located immediately before the temple courtyard, a large building built in the second or third century AD with a bath suite at its south-west corner may have served as a residence for cult personnel.³⁵ Most of these buildings, though denominated 'sacred' because they were inside the *temenos* walls, had a non-ritual or functional character in that their purpose was to accommodate, entertain or purify the worshippers. A similar functional area is situated in the southern part

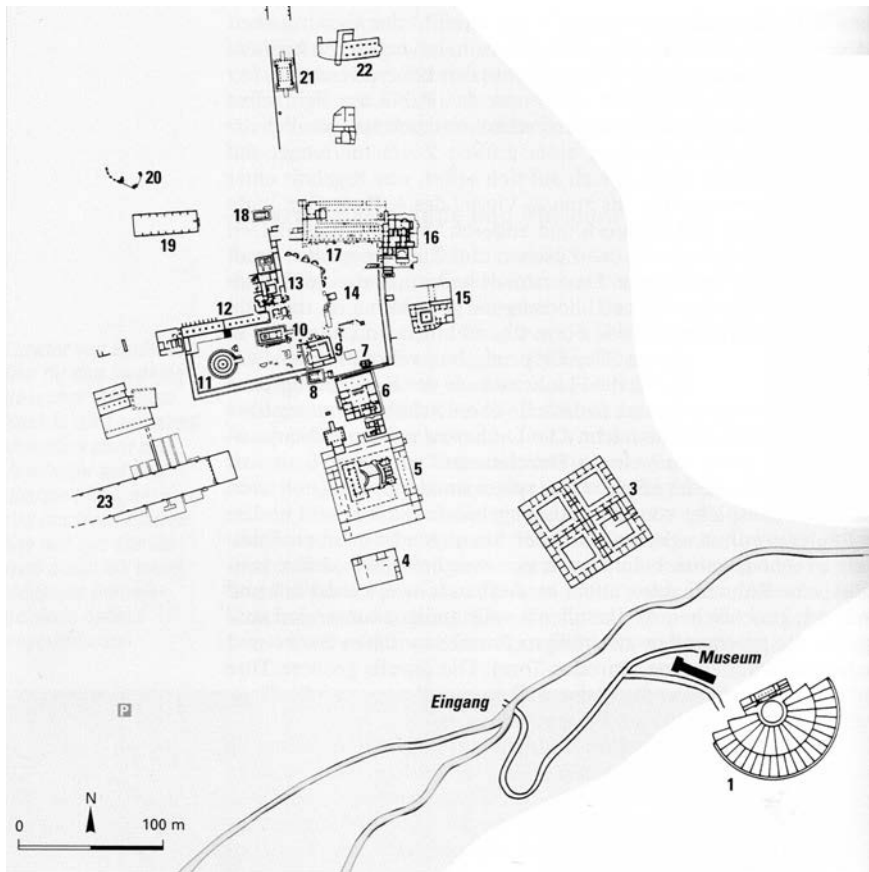


Figure 4.2 Epidauros. Asclepieion. Plan after Schneider and Lambert, *Peloponnes*. Ostfildern: DuMont, 2006, 196.

of the *temenos*, including a monumental *hestiatorion* (5) and a huge *katagogeion* with more than 70 rooms (3) grouped around four *peristyles*, as well as a *stadion* (23) and a *palaestra* (6).³⁶ Most of these buildings were erected in the fourth/third century BC. Between the banqueting room and the hostel building, the oldest bath of the Greek period (fourth/third century BC) was situated, with 11 rectangular rooms around a large colonnaded courtyard.³⁷ On the hillside there was a theatre (1), hosting up to 14,000 spectators.³⁸

Situated between these two functional areas was the ritual area of the sanctuary, with the altar and the spring as the ritual centre. The large courtyard was dominated by the fourth-century Doric temple (10) of Asclepius and the famous Epidaurian *thymele* (360–330 BC) (11). According to Riethmüller, the temple *cella* was accessible to a broader public, men and women alike.³⁹ The open

space between these buildings was probably filled with dozens of statues and thank-offerings, but also with the impressive *iamata*.⁴⁰ North of the temple is a 70-metre-long *stoa* (12).⁴¹ This is generally interpreted as the so-called *abaton*, described by Pausanias in the second century AD.⁴² The eastern part was erected during the fourth century BC above the remains of an older *stoa*. In the later fourth century, the whole *stoa* was extended to the west. This part had two storeys, with a large staircase leading to the lower level. Stone benches were built between the inner columns and along the side walls. Curtains could probably be drawn between the columns to separate and protect the sleepers.⁴³ East of the *abaton* adjoins the so-called *hieron loutron*, built back in the sixth and fifth century BC and among the oldest buildings in the sanctuary.⁴⁴ This had a portico and a 17-metre deep well, which was said to be a sacred bath (*loutron*) in the fourth century BC when it was attached to the newly built *abaton*. At the same time, the portico was divided into three rooms, preceded by a porch. According to Riethmüller, this too might have been an earlier *abaton*, accompanied by a sacred well for drinking. After the larger *stoa* to the west was constructed, this building was still used as a fountain house.⁴⁵

The Thesmophoria

The Thesmophoria were the oldest and most widely attested festivals of Demeter in the ancient Mediterranean. Their Panhellenic spread points to a very old age, probably as old as the second millennium BC.⁴⁶ While most scholars agree that the festival was based on a strict tripartite schema, it is probably more likely that the rituals, the date and the architecture of the *temenos* were flexible according to local tradition.⁴⁷ No sanctuary to Demeter was built exclusively for the Thesmophoria, as the festival took place only once a year; nevertheless, it must have been important enough for a few spatial features to occur repeatedly. First, most of the sanctuaries related to the Thesmophoria were situated near to, but separated from, a settlement, mostly on a hill.⁴⁸ According to the literature, on the first day – called the *anodos* (going up)⁴⁹ – the participating women left their homes with all their equipment (tents, food, offerings) and walked in a procession⁵⁰ to the *Thesmophorion*. The way itself was not dangerous or exhausting. Nevertheless, the movement from the *polis* to the sanctuary was part of the festival itself, and the women were leaving not only their *oikoi* but also their everyday life to enter the liminal space of the suburban sanctuary. In that context, the festival could be interpreted as a sacred journey, though it did not include a longer travelling.⁵¹ Second, as the rituals were called secret and for women only, most sanctuaries were protected in one way or another. Herodotus records a fence around the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros at Paros.⁵² The Demeter sanctuary of Pergamon was surrounded by a wall from the time of its incorporation into the city in Hellenistic times (Figure 4.3).⁵³ Other sanctuaries were protected by armed men positioned in front of the entrance.⁵⁴ Third, the sanctuaries had to offer enough space to accommodate the women for the duration of the festival. After arriving, the women spent the rest



Figure 4.3 Pergamon. Demeter Sanctuary.

Photo: Carole Raddato.

of the day erecting temporary huts (*skenai*) and tents. None of this can be proven by archaeological evidence, but most sanctuaries either provide enough open space inside the *temenos* to erect temporary buildings, or they had multifunctional *oikoi* that, while used as deposit rooms for votives or cult equipment during the year, could be vacated to accommodate visitors.⁵⁵ The first non-temporary buildings in Gela were two simple *oikoi* (sixth century BC; Figure 4.4). In Pergamon, a *stoa* with a row of *oikoi* was built to the north of the temple, and another *stoa* with three *oikoi* in the west.⁵⁶ Their floor is unpaved and uneven, but portable sleeping or dining furniture could be placed inside. The open space was also used for dancing rituals. On the second day – *nesteia* (fasting) – the women fasted and sat on the ground on mats made from twigs of withy, flea bane and laurel, which were said to be anti-aphrodisiac.⁵⁷ The day ended with a *pannychis*, a ritual which was very common in several women's festivals and needed at least some open space for dancing.⁵⁸ Several sixth-century vases from Corinth show scenes of women in a line holding hands, probably dancing.⁵⁹

Last, the women needed dining facilities. On the last day – called *kalligeneia* (beautiful birth) – the women feasted together before finally returning home. The



Figure 4.4 Gela. Bitalemi Sanctuary. Plan: Wiebke Frieze, after Orlandini 1968, Tav. III.

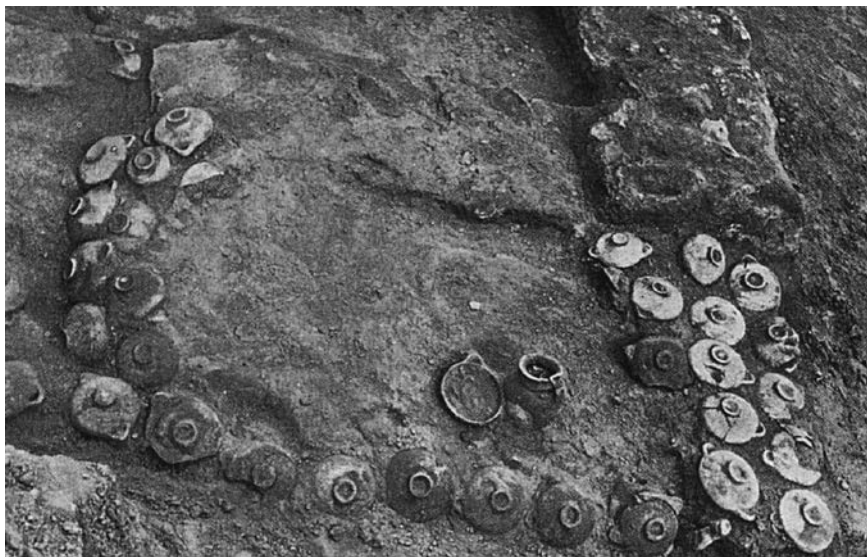


Figure 4.5 Bitalemi Sanctuary, Gela. Votive deposit, after Kron 1992, 644. Abb.13.

husband of one of the women had to provide the food.⁶⁰ Although mentioned only marginally in the written sources, these banquets were obviously very important.⁶¹ The rural *Thesmophorion* of Gela, during its first two centuries (seventh to fifth BC), probably lacked any architecture at all: hundreds of vessels, cups and knives were found, all buried in the sand upside down or in the earth, indicating that this cult place was visited frequently and that it was the venue for large ritual banquets.⁶² Some of these artefacts were buried together with the ashes and bones of sacrificed animals, mostly pigs.⁶³ U. Kron suggests that the women dined together before consecrating what they used for their banquet to the goddess.⁶⁴ At festival times these *oikoi* could also have been used as banquet houses for more important women, while more widespread dining took place in the open air or in temporary huts. The same assumption can be made for the *oikoi* in the Demeter sanctuary of Pergamon. Banquet houses are also highly prominent in the Corinthian Demeter sanctuary, where excavations revealed up to 52 *oikoi*, arranged in parallel rows either side of the road and staircase ascending to the *propylon*. In the classical period there was no temple, only *oikoi* and a large stone-lined pit containing ash, pig bones and pottery, probably relating to the women-only festival.⁶⁵ From Hellenistic times, the Thesmophoria declined. Instead, in Pergamon and probably also in Corinth, mysteries related to the Eleusinian festival were celebrated, by women and men together.⁶⁶

Gendered movement and gendered space in extra-urban sanctuaries

Gender and travel

As the case-studies demonstrate, female agency outside the domestic environment was, if not ubiquitous, at least commonly accepted. Two distinct concepts of sacred travel to extra-urban sanctuaries can be detected: the procession (Eleusis, Andania, Epidauros, Thesmophoria) and the 'individual' journey (Epidauros). Although a procession is *per se* a form of movement, it is also an essential (and public) part of a ritual. In the civic sphere, A. Chanotis pointed out that women always participated in processions, though protected by particular 'safety issues' such as the office of the *gynaikonomos*.⁶⁷ The extra-urban material is less homogeneous than the urban, as we have to distinguish between the differing intentions of the participants. Women who were officially chosen to participate in a procession were much more supervised than women who decided individually to take part in that ritual. This becomes obvious in the *lex sacra* of the Demeter/Kore mysteries of Andania, written in the first century AD.⁶⁸ On the one hand this procession, which runs 16 km from Messene to the extra-urban mystery sanctuary, was led by a group of officially chosen 'sacred *parthenoi* and women,' supervised by a *gynaikonomos*.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the *protomystai* (both men and women), who decided individually to be initiated in the Andanian mysteries following the cult officials, were treated equally throughout the whole ritual. A similar homogeneous group were the *mystai* to Eleusis or the *mystai* to the mysteries of Samothrace.⁷⁰ Both officials as well as

individual travellers to an extra-urban festival were protected by the *ekecheiria*, which could be last for several weeks.⁷¹

By contrast, if the movement took the form not of a procession but of an 'individual' journey to an extra-urban sanctuary (as in the case of the *hiketai* to Epidaurus), then it was not subjected to particular rituals or gender restrictions, not least because the 'ritual part' of the journey began only on entering the *temenos*.⁷² How women travelled to an extra-urban sanctuary depended first and foremost on their status, their fortune and (in the case of the Asklepieia) their health. For reasons of comfort and safety, both sexes probably preferred to travel by sea and in a group.⁷³ In any case, travelling women very likely followed the same socially constructed rules they had to obey at home. Hostels usually had separate rooms for men and women, they probably ate with their families or with other females, and they washed and bathed in isolation from men. Women on the road, however, were not automatically accompanied by men.⁷⁴ The Epidaurian *iamata* related to women do not mention a male relative, the women in Herondas's poem visited the temple of Kos alone and at least two of the listed female *mystai* from Samothrace appear as separate individuals who had travelled to Samothrace on their own account rather than as part of a family group.⁷⁵

Gender and space

In earlier times, many *temenoi* traced a particular natural topography, generally accompanied by an altar. Over the years, this 'sacred centre' could be embellished on a grander scale depending on its topography, cult type and popularity. The ancient cult nucleus usually remained in the centre of the *temenos*, while around it the topography of the sanctuary gradually developed a concentric 'spatial hierarchy' dependent on the space's involvement in religious rituals and/or everyday needs.⁷⁶ Particular extra-urban sanctuaries observed a growing number of building types for various ritual, but also non-ritual, functions.⁷⁷ As the next settlement was often far away, extra-urban sanctuaries, regularly frequented by large groups of visitors either for an annual festival or throughout the year, had to provide accommodation as well as hygienic and economic facilities.⁷⁸ Most of them remained non-permanent over the centuries. The sacred law of Andania mentions tents as well as non-permanent bathing facilities and a fair, all erected temporarily for the duration of the mysteries, which took place every five years.⁷⁹ As the Thesmophoria also were celebrated only rarely, permanent accommodation for sleeping arrangements or banqueting was not required, only an open space to set up the *skenai* brought from home by the women along with their cooking equipment and food. The women of Pergamon could also use the multifunctional *oikoi* around the temple terrace for dining and sleeping. The women of Corinth probably shared some of the permanent banqueting rooms in the Demeter sanctuary, which could be rented for particular ritual and perhaps even non-ritual events.⁸⁰

By contrast, the more popular and frequented a sanctuary became, the larger and more monumental the number of permanent non-ritual buildings, such as baths, latrines, hostels and market stalls. Extra-urban sanctuaries visited all year round by

a constant flow of visitors, such as the Asklepieion of Epidauros, provided a full range of permanent dormitories, dining rooms, baths and entertainment buildings, distinguishable by financial, social and gendered demands. The same applies for other pilgrimage sanctuaries like Delphi, the Asklepieion of Pergamon or Olympia.

Life in this functional or non-ritual space of a sanctuary did not differ very much from life at the worshipper's home. Participants had to get food, eat, bathe and sleep. As they were also tourists, they were probably even in the mood for entertainment and shopping. Hence in the non-ritual space the same gender regulations applied as in the non-ritual space of a *polis*. According to M. Trümper, gender differentiation in the urban landscape 'could have been achieved only by negotiating either permanent or temporary exclusive use of space.'⁸¹ This urban concept also concerns the 'everyday life' of pilgrims in an extra-urban sanctuary. First, it implies that men and women, unless related, slept in different rooms. The sacred law of Andania mentions that a *gynaikonomos* had to supervise the gendered setting-up of tents for the officially appointed 'sacred women and men.'⁸² According to Riethmüller, the large Epidaurian *katagogeion* had men's and women's wings.⁸³ Separated dormitories can be assumed also for the older *katagogeion* in the 'Kotys stoa.' Spatial separation could also be achieved by temporary furniture, such as the curtains or screens in the *abaton* of Epidauros.

More controversial is the segregation of gender-separated baths. Archaeological and written sources attest that, at least from the fourth century BC onwards, both sexes visited public baths.⁸⁴ As bathing took place naked, men and women were certainly isolated from one another. For a spatial division in urban baths, Trümper provides three different models dependent on the topography and chronology of a particular place: gender-exclusive bath buildings; exclusive bathing hours for men and women; and separate rooms. In Andania the *gynaikonomos* supervised the bathing, which implies a temporary regulation. In the Asklepieia, bathing was even more important, as it had not only hygienic but also ritual and therapeutic meanings.⁸⁵ In Epidauros, the sacred well attached to the incubation room was used only for drinking or scooping water.⁸⁶ For bathing, earlier pilgrims used the cold-water bath, south of the large banquet hall, until the second-century AD renovation process involved the building of several hot *thermae*.⁸⁷ However, it is very likely that women and men used these baths at different times during the day, as they did in an urban context.⁸⁸

Meals in extra-urban sanctuaries were served in sacred and secular contexts which are not always clearly distinguishable. Many literary sources, as well as the dominant banqueting architecture in many extra-urban sanctuaries, refer to the important role of sacred meals within the local ritual.⁸⁹ As in many cults the sacrificial meat was meant to be eaten inside the *temenos* (*ou phora*), most of the principal meals had at least a semi-sacred background.⁹⁰ But as many worshippers stayed for a longer period than the duration of the central ritual, not all meals can be seen in a religious context. These non-ritual meals mostly took place in the open air, but as C. Leybold suggests for Corinth, wealthier families could even rent permanent banqueting rooms for their private meals during non-festival times.⁹¹ The same can be implied for the *hestiatorion* of Epidauros.⁹² The gender rules

for these non-ritual meals inside a sanctuary once more resembled the domestic context, in which the presence of free women at a *symposion* was highly unusual, but at everyday family meals, common.⁹³

Secular gender restrictions were also applied within the sanctuaries' entertainment buildings, the gymnasia, stadia, theatres or hippodrome. As women generally did not participate in games or stage performances, they were uncommon active participants. However, theatres in particular were seldom used solely as festival venues, but for all sorts of entertainment throughout the year.⁹⁴ At least from Hellenistic times, women were allowed as spectators: seldom in the first row, but at the back or the sides of the auditorium, and very likely segregated from men.⁹⁵

Finally, most extra-urban sanctuaries had a commercial area. The pilgrims had to supply themselves with food, but there were also other stalls offering sacrificial goods, votives and devotionalia.⁹⁶ At festival times their number could multiply. The sacred law of Andania mentions a fair which accompanied the mysteries in a specific area (*agora*) right outside the *temenos*.⁹⁷ A similar institution can be assumed for Epidauros. Depending on their wealth and social status, travelling women, as in their *poleis*, took part in these commercial and touristic activities either as professionals or as consumers.⁹⁸

In contrast, gender segregation in the inner, ritual area of an extra-urban sanctuary shows a very different picture. The case-studies hypothesize that the moment an individual entered a sacred sphere the gender aspect became secondary. This is most obvious for the venue of the central ritual: in contrast to the relatively fixed roles of the cult officials of the Andanian mysteries, the Andanian *lex sacra* mentions the *protomystai* as an almost homogeneous group. Both sexes had to obey the same purity and clothing restrictions.⁹⁹ All main rituals were performed together. This included not only the central initiation, but also the preliminary procession, the sacrifices, the ritual dramas and the banquets afterwards.¹⁰⁰ A similar 'religious gender equality' could be applied in the cult of Asclepius. Men and women sacrificed together. They probably drank from the same sacred well, and they had to follow the same *leges sacrae*.¹⁰¹ Only the incubation took place gender-separated (or was supervised by a priest).¹⁰² Finally, the designated sacred banquets in extra-urban sanctuaries also differ from the secular meals in a non-ritual context. Menander describes an open-air picnic lunch in a sanctuary of Pan and the nymphs, where women and men of different *oikoi* meet to eat what they sacrifice to the local gods.¹⁰³ A joint sacred meal also followed the mysteries of Andania. While the 'sacred women' were responsible for the preparation of the meal, all *mystai* probably ate together.¹⁰⁴ The same can be assumed for the incubates in Epidauros.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

As has already been demonstrated for the domestic context, neither 'sacred' architecture nor 'sacred' movement and agency concerning an extra-urban sanctuary can *per se* be separated into specific women's and men's areas.¹⁰⁶ Many parameters other than gender may have been more crucial with regard to the organization of

the space of a sanctuary or the circumstances of a journey. In this respect at least, the ritual area of a *temenos* could be called ‘gender-neutral,’¹⁰⁷ even if, as shown for the Thesmophoria, the whole *temenos* became gender-exclusive for the duration of a specific festival. This sacred gender equality is reminiscent of the still-prevailing concept for Christian pilgrimage developed in the 1960s/1970s by the anthropologist Victor Turner, based on an existential state called *communitas*. In overriding everyday norms, this status enables pilgrims to meet as equals, independent of social or biological difference.¹⁰⁸ In this context, the ritual space in which the pilgrims met basically knows no bounds or restrictions. As *communitas* promises a respite from social demands and restraints, later scholars developed Turner’s gendered approach by suggesting that women, living as they did in restrictive, male-dominated societies, may have been especially drawn to pilgrimages and its associated freedoms. These sanctuaries were frequently interpreted as ‘loci of anti-establishment’ and as public spaces where women could freely express aspects of their womanhood usually reserved for the privacy of their homes.¹⁰⁹ Ancient Greek women’s participation in individual rituals, as well as their public presence (either epigraphically through the *iamata* of Epidauros or performatively through their participation in the processions of Andania or Eleusis), granted them a degree of autonomy that they generally lacked. In leaving their homes to perform rituals meant to ensure the welfare and continuity of a community (Thesmophoria), they asserted their civic membership.¹¹⁰

However, the case-studies also suggest that the non-ritual space of an extra-urban sanctuary, functionally closer as it was to the pilgrims’ everyday life, was much more restricted by social norms, and thus more affected by gender separation, than the ritual space. Although none of the archaeological remains explicitly refer to a gendered use, it is now evident that the gendered function of a building, defined by the rules and traditions related to the events inside, could be made either permanently or temporarily exclusive to men or women, as in the domestic and urban environment of the worshippers. It seems that ancient Greek ‘women’s nature’ was ‘adapted’ not only ‘to indoor tasks,’ as Xenophon once claimed.

Notes

- 1 Xen. *Oec.* 7.22–23. Translation: R. Waterfield.
- 2 For a discussion of the older research see: Schnurr-Redford 1996, 15–56. Also Conelly 2007, 3–6.
- 3 Recently Zamfir 2013, 91. On a more theoretical basis also Brumfield 2008, 1–16.
- 4 For recent examples of this binary concept see: Blok 2001, 95–116; Cohen 1991, 70ff.; Vernant 1996, 32.
- 5 For the historical development of the terms ‘private’ and ‘public’ see: Katz 1999, 52f and Schmitt-Pantel 1998.
- 6 E.g. Mazarakis Ainian 2007.
- 7 Regarding Roman women, G. Woolf recently claimed: ‘almost all female mobility took the form either of movement with male family members or as a result of slave trade.’ Woolf 2013, 545. Also Rutherford states that women rarely served as *theōroi*. Rutherford 2013, 160.

- 8 Dillon 2002; Goff 2004; Also: Blok 1987; Cole 2004; Stehle 2012.
- 9 Brock 1994; Scheidel 1995.
- 10 Connelly 2007; Nevett 2001; 2010.
- 11 Nevett 2011 and Trümper 2014. For Rome see: Boatwright 2011.
- 12 Mylonopoulos 2011, 67–77. See also: Dillon 1997, 183–273.
- 13 Delphi: Paus. 10.32.7. Dillon 1997, 192–193. Samothrace: IG XII 8.218 and 220a. Cole 1984, 42; 65. Healing: for example IG IV2 1, 121 *iamata* 4. See for women and Asklepios: Dillon 1997, 189–192 and King 1998, 99–113. Thesmophoria: Cole 1994; Goff 2004, 125–138 and 205–211; Stehle 2012, 192–196.
- 14 On travelling Roman women see: Foubert 2013; Woolf 2013 (non-sacred reasons). Rutherford 2013, 160–161 (sacred).
- 15 Goff 2004, 20.
- 16 I do not use the terms ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ as Riethmüller uses them for his distinction of space in Epidauros: Riethmüller 2005, I, 162–174; 279–295. The term ‘ritual’ rather relates to the religious activity inside a space or building.
- 17 Gilhuly and Worman 2014, 4.
- 18 For ‘space’ in antiquity, most recently Gilhuly and Worman 2014 and Scott 2013. For a definition of ‘sacred space’ see: Cole 2004 and Horster 2010. For a methodological introduction to the discussion of gender and space see: Rendell *et al.* 2000. For an archaeological approach: Mylonopoulos 2008; 2011, 43–78 and Trümper 2012.
- 19 IG IV2 1.121–122. Non-attic women in the *iamata* e.g.: *iamata* A2 Ithmonika from Pellene; B5 Sosastra from Pherai; B19 unknown women from Keos; B22 Nikosiboula from Messenia.
- 20 Competition: Pind. *Nem.* 5, 95–96. Procession: IG IV2, 1, 47 (fourth century BC). Naiden 2005.
- 21 Garlands: Rutherford 2013, 174. Sacred peace generally: Thuk. 5, 49; Xen. *Hell.* 3, 2, 21.
- 22 Travel by sea and land: Rutherford 2013, 178–187.
- 23 Rutherford 2013, 183. On processions: *ibid.*, 206–207. Chaniotis 2013.
- 24 Rutherford 2013, 160. Ephesos: *I.Ephesos*, 891–896.
- 25 Which is nearly a third. Mathew Dillon even suggests that the number of women might have been higher, for the *iamata* were selected by male temple authorities. Dillon 2002, 245.
- 26 Herondas, *mimiambi* 3, 1–95. Translated by M.S. Buck.
- 27 Relatives and slaves: SEG 26.449. Also attested by the relief from Piraeus. Asklepios and Hygieia approach a woman, sleeping on a *kline*; on the left side her husband and family wait. Piraeus. Museum Inv. 405.
- 28 For basic information on the foundation and architecture see: Riethmüller 2005, I, 148–170 and 279–294.
- 29 Riethmüller 2005, I, 148.
- 30 Paus. 2. 27.1. This regulation did not tend to separate male and female, but only mentioned individuals who obviously affected the standing of Asclepius.
- 31 E.g. M. Iulius Apellas. second century AD. SIG3 1170.
- 32 Longer stay: Str. 8. 6.15. Treatment in sanctuary: Aristides, *Oratio* XLVII 14–15; 65 (for Pergamon). Festival: Schol. Pind. *Ad Nemeas*, 3, 147. Relatives and slaves: SEG 26.449.
- 33 Paus. 2. 27.6. Riethmüller 2005, I, 282–283.
- 34 This complex was interpreted either as the hostel of Antonius or as a sanctuary of Egyptian deities. According to Trümper, it had a ‘fairly independent use.’ See Riethmüller 2005, I, 282; Trümper 2014, 222.
- 35 Trümper 2014, 225. Riethmüller regards this complex as a bath. Riethmüller 2005, I, 170–174.
- 36 IG IV 1 (2) 123 No. 64. There was probably also a hippodrome NW of the *stadion* (fifth century BC). Riethmüller 2005, I, 293. The stadion on the west side was probably

- surrounded by many other buildings. Riethmüller 2005, I, 280. For the division of the *temenos*' space see: Riethmüller 2005, I, 162–174; 279–295.
- 37 Riethmüller 2005, I, 291; Trümper 2014, 216–217.
- 38 Riethmüller 2005, I, 289–295.
- 39 *Ibid.*, I, 286. See also: Porph. *Abst.* 2.19 (for the inscriptions at the temple) and Herondas *mimiambi* 3, 1–95 (for Cos).
- 40 With a dimension of 1.7 x 0.75 m, these tablets must have been impressive. Pausanias records that there were once more than six of them. Paus. 2.27.3. Naiden 2005, 81.
- 41 Riethmüller 2005, I, 285–287.
- 42 Paus. 2. 27.2.
- 43 Riethmüller 2005, I, 286.
- 44 *Ibid.*, I, 170–173.
- 45 *Ibid.*, I, 172; Trümper 2014, 212–216.
- 46 Generally see: Cole 1994; Dillon 2002, 110–119; Goff 2004, 125–138 and 205–211; Parker 2005, 270–283; Stehle 2012, 192–196.
- 47 E.g. Athens 3 days: Clinton 1996 compared to Sicily 10 days: Diod. *Sic.* 2. 26.7. Cic. *Verr.* 4.53. 119.
- 48 Gela: Kron 1992. But also Demeter Malophoros sanctuary in Selinunt or S. Anna in Agrigento. Hinz 1998, 71–74 and 144–151, as well as Corinth: Bookidis and Stroud 1997 and Cyrene: White 1993. Generally: Bremmer 2014, 166–179; Cole 1994, 204–205.
- 49 Ar. *Thesm.* 281, 585, 623, 893. IG II2 1177.23.
- 50 Isaeus 6.50.
- 51 For an anthropological approach to the tripartite schema of pilgrimage, see: Turner 1969.
- 52 Hdt. 6.134.1–135.3. On secret rituals see: Hdt. 2. 171.2. Ar. *Ecc1.* 443.
- 53 Bohtz 1981. The sanctuary was first established suburban.
- 54 At Methymna a *gynaikonomos* over 40 was chosen to guard outside the *Thesmophorion*. LSCG 127, fourth century bc.
- 55 On the *skenai* see: Kron 1992, 620–623.
- 56 Bohtz 1981, 32–35. Taf. 49.56 and Taf 35–37.
- 57 Kron 1992, 620–623; Parker 2005, 274.
- 58 For example also in the Adonia: Dillon 2002, 165. A late Byzantine *scholion* on Lucian also mentions a ritual of throwing piglets into a chasm, after which their rotten remains were brought up again by the women to be mixed with seeds, promising a good harvest. Schol. Luc. Dial meret. ii.1. As this is probably a very local ritual, it will not be discussed here.
- 59 So called Corinthian *Frauenfest* scenes. E.g. Mus. Baltimore 48.192.
- 60 Isaeus 3. 80.
- 61 Mylonopoulos 2011, 72.
- 62 Hinz 1998, 55–64; Kron 1992. That the banquets were 'sacred' is indicated by the fact that all the equipment was left behind and buried inside the *temenos*.
- 63 See votivs and vases *in situ*: Orlandini 1966, Tav. 13 and 14.2.
- 64 Hinz 1998, 57–58; Kron 1992, 647; Orlandini 1966, 22. The sanctuary has never had an altar.
- 65 Thousands of terracotta figurines of, presumably, Demeter, as well as terracotta miniature *likna* (fruit baskets). Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 393–412. Similar in Cyrene: White 1993, 177–187.
- 66 Pergamon: Thomas 1998. Corinth: Mylonopoulos 2011, 73–75.
- 67 Chaniotis 2013, 30.
- 68 For Andania see: Paus. 4.1. 5–9 and 33. 4–5; Deshours 2006; Gawlinksy 2011; and Inge Nielsen in this volume.
- 69 LSCG I. 120–134 No. 65, 29–30; sacred women: LSCG I. 120–134 No. 65, 34. Sacred oath: LSCG I. 120–134 No. 65, 1–11.

- 70 Eleusis: Parker 2005, 342. Samothrace: IG XII 8.218 and 220a. There are different terms in the inscriptions.
- 71 Thuk. 5, 49. Xen. *Hell.* 3, 2, 21.
- 72 There were, e.g., three groups of visitors to the sanctuary of Samothrace: *theóroi* (for the festival), *mustai* (individuals for the mysteries) and cities with filial cults. Rutherford 2013, 282–286.
- 73 Travel on land: Xen. *Symp.* 9, 7. Travel by sea and land: Rutherford 2013, 178–187. There is no particular work on Greek women travelling. For Roman women see: Foubert 2013 and Woolf 2013.
- 74 As suggested by Woolf 2013, 545.
- 75 Herondas, *mimiambi* 3, 1–95. IG XII 8. 218 and 220a.
- 76 E.g. in Olympia the *altis* with the *pelopion* and the altar and later the temples and the treasuries were surrounded by the dining and the administrative buildings and further away the baths and buildings for accommodation and competition. In Delphi the earliest ritual activities concentrated on the chasm, which was overbuilt by a temple, and the terrace below, with the spring and the *halos*. The treasuries and meeting and competition buildings were built, not only due to their size, further away. In Roman times the so-called *agora* was built in front of the lowest entrance. Frieze 2010, 128–135 and 146–147.
- 77 Mylonopoulos 2011, 45–46 on festival sanctuaries. Generally also: Frieze 2010, 241–288; Morgan 1990; Polignac 1995.
- 78 In some cases, as in Samothrace, a settlement developed next to the sanctuary to supply the visitors with what they needed.
- 79 LSCG I. 120–134 No. 65.
- 80 Leybold 2008, 84–89; Mylonopoulos 2011, 73–74.
- 81 Trümper 2012, 296.
- 82 LSCG I. 120–134 No. 65, 34–41.
- 83 Riethmüller 2005, I, 294.
- 84 Trümper 2012, 300.
- 85 The sacred law at Pergamon required a bath before lying down for incubation. M. Fränkel, *AvP* VIII2, 1895, No. 264. Bathe in the sea before incubation: Ar. *Plout.* 656–658.
- 86 Riethmüller 2005, I, 172. Also Trümper 2014.
- 87 Riethmüller 2005, I, 291.
- 88 However, I would question the designations of the so-called men's bath and women's bath in Oropos. Aristoph. frg. 32 K. Xenoph. *Mem.* III 13, 3. Erasistratos and Euenor at Athens. II 46 c. d. Anth. *Pal.* XII 129. Even though the smaller bath next to the altar as well as the larger one next to the *stoa* were supplied by the sacred well, nothing gives a hint of a gendered use. Pausanias mentions that the Oropians 'neither sacrifice into the sacred well nor use it for purifications or for lustral water.' Paus. 1, 34, 4. Thus the basin next to the altar could also be explained as a purification well, while the more secluded but larger bath in the north-east was used for lustral reasons.
- 89 For the architecture of sacred banquets generally see: Leybold 2008.
- 90 *Oropos* 277.31–32. See also Paus. 2, 27.1. On *ou phora* in Asklepieia see: Ehrenheim 2010, 90–92.
- 91 Leybold 2008, 188–201.
- 92 Riethmüller 2005, I, 290.
- 93 Nep. *Praef.* 6–7. See for discussion also on the participation of slaves and prostitutes: Corner 2012.
- 94 Aelius Aristides presented his works in the theatre of the Asklepieion of Pergamon. Aristides, *Oratio.* II.30 and IV.43–44.
- 95 Very few seat inscriptions in theatres were dedicated to women. See Bremen 1996, 155–157.
- 96 For Italic sanctuaries generally see: Garcia Morcillo 2013.
- 97 LSCG 65, 99–103.

- 98 Schnurr-Redford 1996, 213–224. On women in the Roman forum see: Boatwright 2011. For Athenian women see: Nevett 2011.
- 99 Same equality in other mysteries like Eleusis: Parker 2005, 342.
- 100 When a theatrical performance was part of the ritual, as in many mystery cults (Eleusis, and probably also Andania and in the *Thesmophorion* of Pergamon), women and men probably sat together watching: see generally Nielsen 2002.
- 101 Paus. 2. 27.1. Pergamon: Habicht 161.11–24. Epidauros: Edelstein and Edelstein 1998 II, 149. Dillon 1997, 244–246.
- 102 In the fourth century Aristophanes says that men and women slept in one room in the relatively small Asklepieion of Piraeus. Ar. *Plut.* 670–675. For incubation in general see: Ehrenheim 2010. See also *Oropos* 277.43–47 and Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis in this volume.
- 103 Menander, *Dyskolos* 555.
- 104 Ritual dining in mystery cults, see: Nielsen 2014.
- 105 Ehrenheim 2010, 90.
- 106 Domestic: Nevett 2001; 2010.
- 107 As Mylonopoulos suggests for the whole sanctuary. Mylonopoulos 2011, 77.
- 108 Turner 1997, 94–165. He also claims it to be an idealized model.
- 109 Mernissi 1977, 111.
- 110 For a similar non-gendered approach in earlier Near Eastern societies, see McCorriston in this volume. Further research in this context is necessary.

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5 The pilgrim's passage into the sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace

Bonna D. Wescoat

Samothrace, a small, windswept, mile-high beacon of an island visible across the northern Aegean from Troy to Mt. Athos, was famed in antiquity for its mystery cult of the Megaloi Theoi, Great Gods, whose rites of initiation, we are told, promised initiates protection at sea and the opportunity to become “both more pious and more just and better in every respect than they were before” (Diodorus 5.48.4–50.1).¹ Initiation was particular to this place, and lists inscribed with the names of initiates from Rome to Pessinus and Alexandria to Tomis attest that the experience and its proffered guarantees were deemed well worth the challenging journey.² In fact the two components of the pilgrimage itself engage these two assurances. We focus on the rites of initiation within the Sanctuary of the Great Gods as the transformative event, but the *sine qua non* of initiation (for all but the small local population) was reaching the island.³ To receive the gods’ protection at sea one first had to risk venturing forth. Once on the island, the experience within the sanctuary must have also played to the prospect of moral improvement, but we do not know what exactly transpired, for the rites were held in silent trust by the community of initiated.⁴

Since the mid-nineteenth century scholars have attempted to tease a story from the palimpsest of textual sources and an emergent archaeological record. Excavations have revealed a spectacular Hellenistic sanctuary, but one that complicates rather than clarifies our understanding of the mysteries (Figure 5.1). The artefactual basis for the cult actions remains tantalizingly slim. Lamps have been taken to confirm nocturnal timing; *bothroi* and *escharai* as evidence of chthonic rites; *kantharoi* and dining rooms as signs of convivial feasting; conical bowls as evidence of libation; a theatre as a locus of ritual drama; occasional imagery as representations of the gods; rings as tokens; and lists of names as records commemorating the experience.⁵ The fancy marble buildings for which the sanctuary is justly famous have proven a particular challenge. Most are archaeologically well preserved although no longer standing, and their idiosyncratic features intimate a role in the *mysteria*.⁶ However, there are too many buildings to apportion between the suggested rituals of initiation, and it has proven difficult to pin particular rites to specific structures.⁷ It is tempting to turn to cognate sanctuaries – either of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis or of the Kabeiroi on Lemnos or at Thebes – to fill in

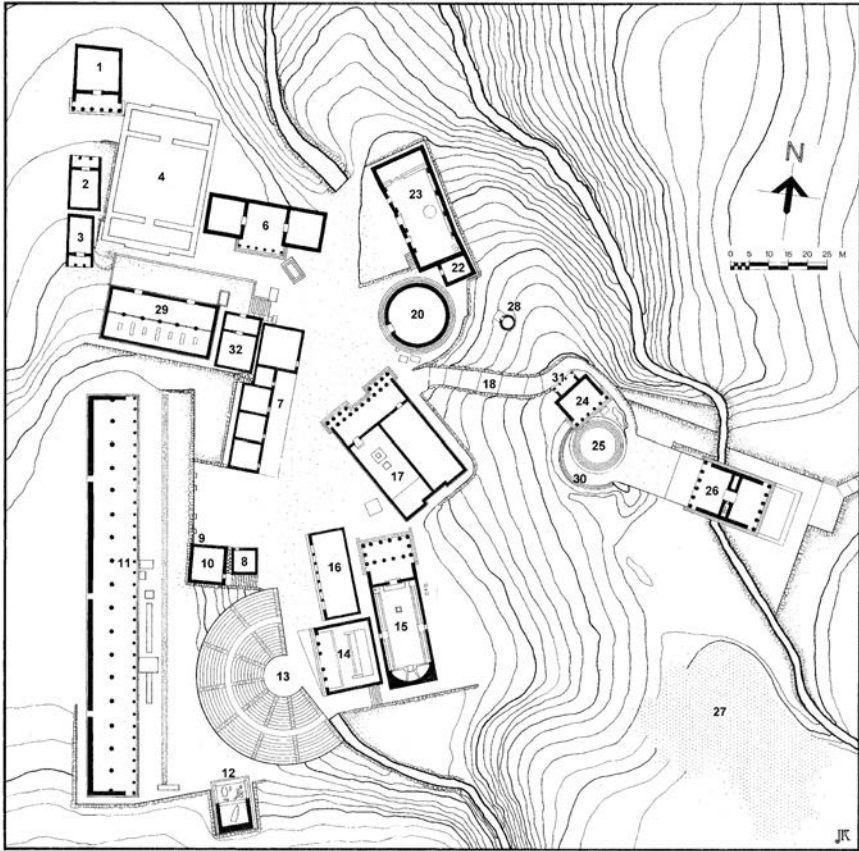


Figure 5.1 Restored plan of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace. 1,2,3. Unidentified Late Hellenistic buildings. 4. Unfinished Early Hellenistic building. 5. Byzantine fort. 6. Milesian Dedication. 7,8,10. Dining rooms. 9. Faux Bronze Age niche. 11. Stoa. 12. Nike Monument. 13. Theater. 14. Altar Court. 15. Hieron. 16. Hall of Votive Gifts. 17. Hall of Choral Dancers. 18. Sacred Way. 20. Rotunda of Arsinoe II. 22. Sacristy. 23. Anaktoron. 24. Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV. 25. Theatral Circle. 26. Propylon of Ptolemy II. 27. Southern Necropolis. 28. Doric Rotunda. 29. Neorion. 30. Stepped retaining wall. 31. Ionic Porch. 32. Hestiatorion. © American Excavations, Samothrace. Drawing J. Kurtich.

the gaps we find in the sanctuary and cult of the Great Gods on Samothrace, but using one to explain the other runs the risk of creating a hybrid.⁸

If written sources are laconic, artefacts limited, and reliance on comparable sites potentially misleading, there remain two important yet undervalued bodies of evidence for understanding Samothracian initiation: the physical environment and the bodily actions and perceptions of pilgrims moving through that environment. The

Great Gods had a well zoned *temenos* set within rugged terrain, with an eastern entrance area, cult buildings nestled within a narrow valley, and western terraces given over to dining, theatre, respite, and votive display. The experience of moving between these focal areas was a constituent part of initiation, even if it did not constitute a specific cultic rite. By way of example, I focus here on the passage leading from the entrance into the heart of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods (which we have called the Sacred Way), as an archaeological object in dynamic interaction with the island landscape, and as the agent shaping the pilgrims' kinaesthetic experience and visual perceptions, which, in turn, affected their state of mind.⁹ The Sacred Way offers an advantage to testing this approach because its known function – to shape and control ingress and egress to the sacred valley – allows us some insight into pilgrims' expectations in traversing the passage. While the sanctuary served as the venue for both initiation into the *mysteria* and for a larger festival attended by state delegations (*theōriā*),¹⁰ I concentrate on the passage as it shaped the experience of prospective initiates (initiants).

Phenomenological investigation of the spatial environment forged through the interaction of landscape, architecture, and human movement cannot reveal the rites of initiation. It can highlight the physical conditions surrounding those rites, draw out the sequence of sight lines and view sheds that framed the pilgrims' vision, and track the different forms of energy exerted by participants moving across complex terrain. This evidence allows us to build a place-based narrative of the initiands' journey and to explore (through the analogue of our own bodies) the kinds of perceptions – and emotions – attendant on moving through such spaces.¹¹ Such investigations have an acknowledged role in architecture and landscape archaeology; they find a less comfortable place in the classical world, where the written word remains paramount as a point of departure and of corroboration.¹² Nevertheless, the efficacy of the Samothracian mysteries did not reside in the actions, words, or observations per se but in the initiands' persuasion that by participating, something happened to them – in that place and over that time – which resulted in changed prospects.¹³ Environment and architecture have marked capacity to condition perceptions and elicit emotional response. Ambient vision strongly conditioned more specific visual encounters (witness of a sacred drama, miracle, or revelation; encounter with a thank-offering),¹⁴ as did movement from one place to another, even if it was not within the formalized public display of a *pompe* or a devotional act such as dance.¹⁵ It therefore seems fair game to examine how these factors helped to shape the Samothracian mysteries.

The place

Even today, the Sanctuary of the Great Gods has an aura of sacred ground. Set facing the sea in a cleft in the earth, the sanctuary physically integrates the divine forces of earth, sky, and sea associated with the Great Gods.¹⁶ The 13-mile-long, mile-high island rises at the plate margin formed by the north Anatolian fault. The *temenos* on its northern coast rides a zone of geologic tension, just west of the fault separating the ophiolite massif of the mountain ridges from the alluvium, which

plunges seaward. The sacred space was framed and bisected by three converging torrents, the outer two forming the boundaries of the *temenos*, and the inner one shaping its most sacred valley. Although seasonal, these torrents were – and remain – powerful natural forces, carving deeply through the alluvium to expose volcanic outcrops and strewing massive erratic boulders in their wake. The numinosity of the Samothracian sanctuary emanates from its intimate physical seclusion yet vast visual purchase on the towering mountain ridge to the southeast and the broad Thracian Straights to the north.¹⁷ The prevailing Etesian winds from the northeast were a constant tactile and auditory force from May through September.

Archaeology of the Sacred Way

The physical path of the pilgrim developed dynamically as part of the intensive elaboration of the entrance to the sanctuary between the late fifth through late second century BC. How it came to be is worth examining from the perspective of passage, movement, and vision rather than the more traditional focus on architectural development.

Pilgrims entered the *temenos* from the open plateau to the east, not via the natural contours carved by the torrents. They ascended ca. 60 mamsl (197 feet) from the harbour through the ancient city¹⁸ to the crest of the ridge separating the city from the adjacent sanctuary. From there, movement into the sanctuary became a series of descents cutting across the natural topography (Figures 5.1–5.2). Even prior to the construction of the city walls and the Propylon of Ptolemy II, it is likely that the passage crossed the ravine at the place where an outcrop of trachyte bedrock formed a small plateau on the Eastern Hill.¹⁹ The Theatral Circle (a circular space framed by steps) embedded into this plateau is, to date, one of the earliest permanent structures identified in the sanctuary (late fifth or early fourth century BC; Figure 5.1, no. 25).²⁰ A 2-m-wide corridor cutting through its steps indicates that the Sacred Way originally bisected the Theatral Circle, making it essentially an enlarged part of the passage itself. Gathering within this space broke the momentum but not the trajectory of moving toward the heart of the sanctuary. Once through the stepped circle, the path skirted around the pinnacle of the outcrop to descend westward into the sanctuary roughly where the later paved road now runs. Nearing the valley floor, the passage shifted southward, likely pushed in this direction by installations that preceded the marble aggrandizement of the sanctuary, including the terrace wall running beneath the Rotunda and possibly the Orthostate Structure.²¹

Within a generation or two, however, the Samothracians realized the potential of the Theatral Circle to serve as a discrete destination. They filled in the steps, constructed a fieldstone building over the passage, and redirected the Sacred Way, likely to the position we can observe by the late fourth century, when the Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV replaced the humbler fieldstone structure (Figure 5.1, no. 24). The Dedication (a marble hexastyle prostyle pavilion built 322–317 BC) stood tangent to the Theatral Circle but was angled westward to face the approaching pilgrims. A huge stele was installed where the passage had been, directly in

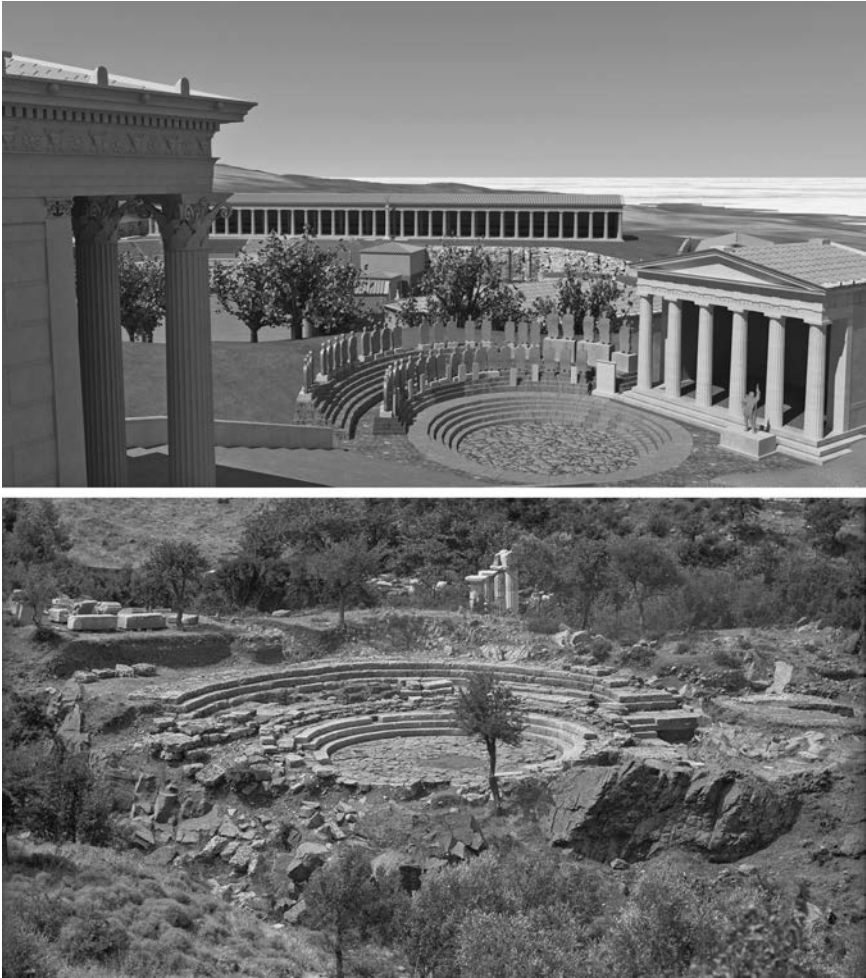


Figure 5.2 Above: Digital model of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, from the east. Below: Actual state view of the sanctuary, from the east. © American Excavations, Samothrace.

Photo J. R. McCredie.

the pilgrims' line of sight.²² Soon after, monument platforms bearing groups of life-size bronze statues were serially erected to form a concentric ring along with southwest arc of the circle (late fourth into the third century BC). Together, building, stele, and statues focused attention on the orchestral space and blocked access to the south and west. The Sacred Way now swung northeast of the Dedication, around the outer rim of a great bedrock outcrop forming the edge of the ravine. Although the path around the outcrop no longer survives, its position is confirmed by the remains of the retaining wall for the road northwest of the Ionic Porch

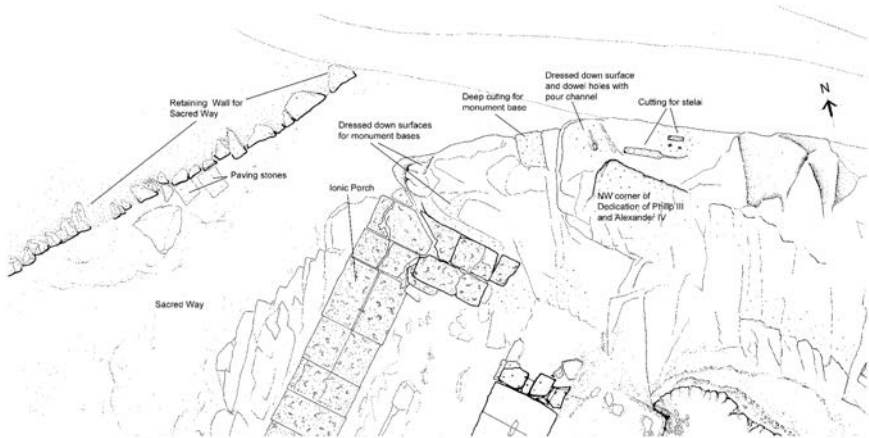


Figure 5.3 Detail of the Sacred Way at the northwest corner of the Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV. © American Excavations, Samothrace. Drawing B. D. Wescoat.

(Figure 5.3). Moreover, cuttings in the bedrock near the northeast corner of the building were made for monuments and stelai that could only be seen from the north as the pilgrim rounded that corner of the Dedication. The radical reorientation of the Sacred Way from a straightforward course within the architectonically enhanced natural topography to a circuitous (and potentially dangerous) circumnavigation along the edge of the *temenos* may have been the by-product of an aggressive building campaign. However, other options were available. As argued below, the profound consequences of this change on perception and movement suggest it was intentional.

Once around the Dedication, the Sacred Way turned to descend westward into the central valley (Figures 5.4–5.5). The opportunity for display and viewing at this pivotal was not wasted. The Samothracians installed a narrow Ionic Porch (for spectators, dedications, or both; late third to early second century BC; Figure 5.1, no. 31) against the blank north side of the Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV. In its current configuration, the passage from the Ionic Porch to the valley floor consisted of a paved ramp that was trenched into the hillside and framed by retaining walls.²³ Although partially destroyed in some areas and modified in others, its course remains clear. The road made two slight switches – responding to topography and architecture – to relieve the grade en route down the hill. In its final bend, the passage ran parallel to the retaining wall behind the Rotunda of Arsinoe, ending to face directly into the northeast corner of the Hall of Choral Dancers (constructed ca. 340 BC). The slope became progressively steeper as it neared the central valley. The precise degree is impossible to calculate given the state of preservation, but the drop in elevation indicates an overall slope of about 13.3 degrees, or 23.7 per cent grade. Periodic steps helped to regulate the grade.

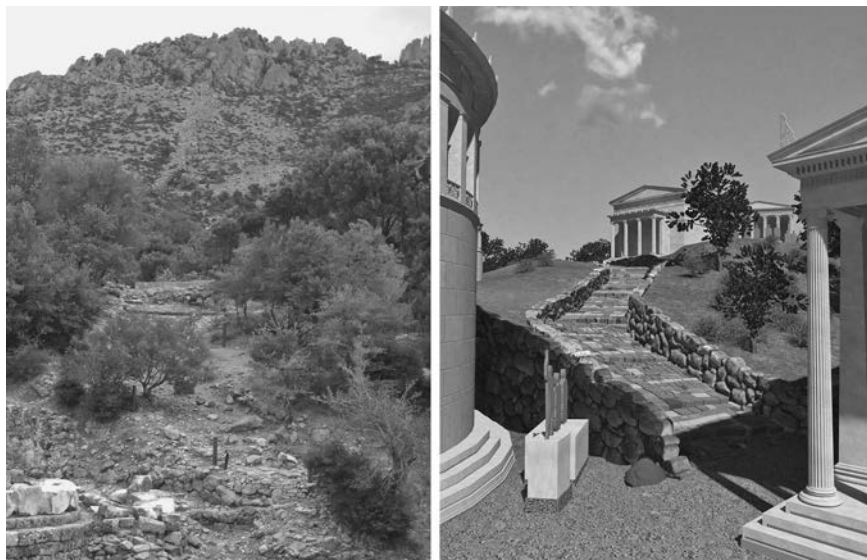


Figure 5.4 Left: View of the Sacred Way, from the west. Right: Digital model of the Sacred Way, from the west. © American Excavations, Samothrace. Photo B. D. Wescoat.



Figure 5.5 Aerial view of the central valley of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, with a view of the Sacred Way between the Rotunda and Hall of Choral Dancers. © Archives of the ΙΘ' Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Komotini (detail).

The paving survives chiefly in the midsection of the passage, although scattered slabs confirm that it was once entirely covered with repurposed blocks representing nearly every type of locally quarried stone used in the sanctuary, all cut into rectangular pieces of varying size and fitted together in a random pattern. Similar

paving uncovered just northeast of the Propylon of Ptolemy II suggests the paving extended over the entire course of the Sacred Way from the ancient city to the heart of the sanctuary, fixing and monumentalizing the processional route to the sanctuary.²⁴

The dry-stacked trachyte rubble and fieldstone walls framing the passage stand to a preserved height of ca. 1.0 m on both sides of the Sacred Way. It is striking that the entire passage is sunk into the earth and bounded on both sides by retaining walls. Conventional engineering would suggest different approaches: either a deeper cut into the earth at the top of the slope to reduce the grade, or a more dramatic switch-back cut into, and retained only on, the uphill side. Masons may have needed to cut down to bedrock to secure a track made worn and slippery by centuries of earlier use, but the consistent depth of the Sacred Way below grade for most of the descent suggests that the design had some experiential value as well (see below).

To this point, the investment was entirely within the *temenos* and the Sacred Way maintained close contact with the terrain. However, these conditions radically changed when Ptolemy II seized the opportunity to stake a claim on the sanctuary by constructing an enormous propylon on the opposite side of the ravine (Figure 5.1, no. 26). The building upstaged the Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV in its grander scale, higher elevation, and hexastyle amphiprostyle inscribed façades (280s BC). It also dramatically transformed passage into the sanctuary. A wide marble forecourt to the east (14.48 x 7.25 m) provided a gathering place prior to crossing into the sanctuary. Remains of a hydraulic system just to the east make little sense if not to bring lustral water to this region.²⁵ A thick door wall pierced by a single narrow opening (less than 2 m) separated the two deep porches.²⁶ Huge foundations projected boldly from the sloping eastern face of the ravine, elevating the entranceway and thrusting it westward. In one of the boldest manipulations of sacred topography, builders redirected the torrent to flow through a tunnel bisecting the building, so that the gate physically and symbolically straddled the boundary of the *temenos*. They then bridged the original ravine with a monumental stepped causeway spanning the axial width of the Propylon (11.826 m).²⁷ Blocks belonging to its marble balustrade with pitches of 12 and 18 degrees indicate a switch within the causeway to a steeper grade (from 21.3 to 32.5 per cent) as it emptied into the theatral complex.

The last major addition to the entrance complex, a broad stepped retaining wall, did not affect passage but it did shape perception (Figure 5.1 no. 30). It swung in a non-concentric arc between the Dedication and the ramp of the Propylon, behind the first set of bronze statues (second to first century BC). Its broad platform offered a mezzanine tier for many more life-size bronze statues.

The passage retained this topology through the heyday of the sanctuary's popularity.²⁸ Although developed over many generations as opportunities were realized, the nexus of buildings, monuments, and passageways worked in close concert to shape the pilgrims' physical and perceptual experience at the threshold of the *temenos*. While following opportunities within the landscape, every section of the descent has been strongly manipulated. The walkway itself was

highly elastic, constricting at key points to less than 2 m, and widening at others to 12 m. It included straight descents, circumnavigations, and steep but gentle zigzags as the pilgrim passed through open, covered, and sunken spaces en route to the heart of the sanctuary. The steepness of the grade was considerable (21.3 to 32.5 per cent), even when mitigated by steps set within the descending ramps. The introduction of paving defined the passage more consistently, both visually and kinaesthetically. Between each gathering place, pilgrims could recognize that they were back on the road again. The route was designed primarily for human traffic. Only smaller sacrificial animals could be led along its narrow, circuitous, and steeply descending grade; vehicular traffic was impossible.²⁹ In the mid-nineteenth century, E. Blau and K. Schlottmann report that a marble inscribed *δρομοι τῶν ποδῶν* was seen in the area of the Propylon; it is tempting to suppose it referred to this processional route.³⁰

With this evidence in hand we may re-insert the pilgrims for whom all this was constructed. By tracking movement and vision, we may assess how various anthropogenic manipulations along each leg of the passage affected the perceptions of initiands as they made their way to the heart of the sanctuary.

Movement and perception along the Sacred Way

Initiands must have approached the sanctuary in procession, but not one on the scale of the civic *pompai* celebrated in honour of divinities with fixed festival days.³¹ The initiate lists indicate that the rites were performed when candidates presented themselves on the island; these groups could be relatively small.³² The event was only reiterative for the Samothracians officials; the initiands were new to the process. Given the vow of secrecy, they would not know what lay in store for them, although their expectations were likely peaked with anticipation, curiosity, and trepidation. The procession happened in the evening, for the main rites were nocturnal. Moonlight offered a source of ambient illumination; torch- and lamp-light could cast greater lumens but generated deeper shadows, creating spot-lit effects. Initiands moved with the wind at their back to the threshold of the *temenos*; then they cut across its path.

Passage 1: From the ancient city to the Propylon of Ptolemy II

The steady climb against gravity from the sea to the ridge changed into a sequence of punctuated descents once initiands passed through the city gate. Leaving the ancient city, the initiands were now in open, ambiguous territory (*khôra*), but their first goal, the paved courtyard in front of the Propylon, lay downhill only a little over 100 metres to the south. From this vantage, the imposing north side of the Propylon dominated their view, the corner columns of its two façades offering the best clue of its function (Figure 5.2). As they approached the gateway, the theatral complex on the lower plateau across the ravine came into view: first the north side of the Dedication and then the extraordinary phalanx of bronze statues encircling the sunken orchestra between the two buildings. The buildings engaged each other

over the intervening space; the semicircular gallery of statues visually linked the buildings while facing toward approaching procession. This permanent bronze assembly waiting to receive the initiands gave the complex an outward focus and a human scale. Off to the north, initiands would have a good view of the small Doric Rotunda and behind it the roof of the Rotunda of Arsinoe; in the far distance they might be able to make out the 104-m-long Stoa that framed the western ridge of the sanctuary. But the cult buildings in the central valley were effectively sequestered at this stage of the journey.

Close to the Propylon, the passage dropped into a small paved court cut into the hillside, and yet another step down brought the initiands to the graded area of the Propylon. They did not, however, approach the Propylon from this level. They had to step across a wide marble curb down into a sunken forecourt east of the Propylon. This framed marble paving, equal in width to the building (14.48 m) and some 7.25 m deep, offered the first formal gathering point in the descent and the final one before entering the *temenos*. The wide curb defining the forecourt on three sides, with the Propylon on the fourth, effectively corralled initiates into the area and brought a halt to the procession; something surely took place here before initiands were allowed to set foot in the Propylon. This threshold was the last – and perhaps the best – point at which prohibitions could be imposed. I suggest it was here that the impure were turned back (*praefatio sacrorum*, Livy 45.5.1–45.5.15).³³ Those worthy performed lustrations. With open territory (and the undeserving) left behind, the forecourt marked the end of preparations. Crossing through the Propylon into the *temenos* fully committed them to the experience.

Passage 2: From the Propylon to the Theatral Circle³⁴

While the Propylon's porches were deep and broad, the passage connecting them constricted to a narrow aperture. Limited glimpses of the world beyond must have built anticipation as the pilgrims disaggregated from the assembly to pass in single file or (less comfortably) in pairs through the entrance. Their physical isolation in crossing the threshold gave kinaesthetic expression to the dynamic of initiation itself, which was an essentially personal experience, although endured within the companionship of a group. The tightness of the opening to the initiand's body and the unusual depth of passage formed by the cross walls left no ambiguity that a boundary had been crossed.

Once through the constricted door passage, the space reopened to a broad colonnaded porch; the framed glimpses expanded into a sweeping bird's eye view into the whole of the theatral complex. From the top of the wide ramp, initiands confronted the inscribed epistyle of the Dedication at roughly eye-level. The plunging view down the enormous ramp transformed the tightly framed orchestra and encircling steps into an intimately scaled cul-de-sac. The inner row of statues emphatically centred attention on the Theatral Circle, while the statues of the outer grandstand rose higher, some to face the pilgrims as they descended the ramp, and others to shape the southern boundary of the complex. Collectively, these monuments focused the initiands' attention within the theatral complex, and they

effectively screened the view into the main valley. To the west, the vista was closed by the long Stoa, which stood at roughly the same elevation as the Theatral Circle but at considerable distance, crowning the ridge on the opposite side of the sanctuary. In between, only parts of the roofs of the central cult buildings, the Hieron and Hall of Choral Dancers, were visible, and even then only from the top of the ramp. In effect, the buildings of initiation in the heart of the sanctuary remained veiled not only by the configuration of the theatral complex, but also by the illusion of continuous high ground created by the Stoa on the opposite ridge.

Descending the plunging ramp, gravity pulled on the bodies of the initiands like a magnet, their momentum increasing as the pitch of the ramp switched to the steeper grade. Momentum dissipated as the initiands spread out over the top tier of the Theatral Circle. They stepped down yet again to gather on the sunken steps. Above them hovered the gathering of bronze witnesses that bore the memory of countless past initiations; they offered some assurance to those experiencing the mysteries for the first time. Within the circular theatral complex, visual and kinetic energy focused inwardly toward the actions accomplished within the orchestra. Initiands would know that they were not in the heart of the sanctuary, but at this stage they were given little (no?) visual or spatial indication of what lay in the valley beyond. We do not (and may never) know the specific nature of the rites that took place in the Theatral Circle. While clearly within the *temenos*, the location of this complex at the entrance, its exposure outside the sanctuary, and the outward orientation of its monuments suggest that rites of a preliminary nature were conducted here, ones that prepared the candidates for the confidential experiences conducted in the valley beyond. Initiands were likely both participants and witnesses. Perhaps they received sacred instructions, offered sacrifice or libation, or witnessed ritual drama.³⁵ If *thronosis* was a preliminary rite within Samothracian initiation (an attractive hypothesis given the several references to Korybantes and korybantic activity on the island), the Theatral Circle offers a compelling venue, provided the rite could take place in such a fully exposed setting.³⁶ Local wheel-made lamps recovered at floor level provide welcome confirmation that some of the rites performed here took place at night.³⁷ Tens of thousands of fragments of locally made conical bowls that were found here would make effective libation dishes, but that does not preclude other uses. They seem to have been deposited here as pilgrims left the sanctuary, but possibly they were initially received and used here as well.³⁸ Even if we cannot pinpoint the exact nature of the actions performed in this space, we can understand from a spatial and kinetic perspective that by intentionally stopping the procession at this station the pace was slowed down, the community regrouped, anticipation built up, and the tension heightened. Initiands knew their journey was fully underway, but their main destination lay somewhere in the amorphous gulf between where they were, and what they could see.

Passage 3: From the Theatral Circle to the Hall of Choral Dancers³⁹

In contrast to the wide-open, plunging descent coming into the theatral complex, the route out was intentionally circuitous. It embodied rather than overcame the

physical environment: clinging to the earth; pushing and pulling its passengers around and down the hill; gradually unveiling glimpses of what lay in store. To move on, initiands had to back out of the orderly spatial forms composing the communal theatron, leaving just to the north of where they had entered. The group broke into a thin file as initiands found their way on the narrow passage skirting the edge of the *temenos*. To the left rose bedrock and the solid north wall of the Dedication of Philip III and Alexander IV; to the right there was only the ravine. They pushed northward rather than west into the main valley. Following hard upon the inwardly focused, embracing space of the Theatral Circle, this section of the passage must have been confounding and disorienting. In the darkness, initiands might well have felt they travelled on the edge of an abyss. The situation was ripe for anxiety to supplant anticipation.

But once again the form, orientation, and aspect of the passage changed as it veered west around the Dedication. At the turning point stood the Ionic Porch, its familiar architectural order an anchoring landmark. The initiands no longer clung to the side of a ravine but instead entered a paved channel cut into the earth and lined with walls of polygonal trachyte stones and basalt boulders, the same materials that make the land itself. Initiands must have sensed the strong chthonic overtones, as if they were descending into the heart of the sanctuary through a cleft in the earth. As they moved down the steep grade, they would have felt strength in the weight of their bodies working with gravity on the stepped ramp, but also the need to restrain the momentum that built with each step.⁴⁰

If they took their eyes off the stepped ramp, initiands would see rising before them the two remarkable rotundas: first the small Doric Rotunda, and behind it the huge Rotunda of Arsinoe. The pilastered upper gallery of the Rotunda of Arsinoe dominated the view, so that from the vantage of the initiand, it gave the impression of a traditional tholos encircled by a peristyle. Its parapet, decorated with sash-draped boukrania flanking rosette-patera, hovered on a visual plane level with the Stoa and the Ionic Porch, as if part of the same upper world. Only as the initiands descended further would the articulated upper gallery give way to the imposingly smooth, closed surface of the drum that dominated the central sanctuary. As the passage broadened and contracted with its subtle switches, views opened onto the lower tier of buildings at the north end of the central valley. Great boulder retaining walls framing the eastern and western sides of the valley enhanced the subterranean effect already at play in the Sacred Way. Nearing the valley floor, the initiands faced directly into the northeast corner of the Hall of Choral Dancers. With a final sharp turn to the right, they threaded the gap between the Rotunda and the Hall of Choral Dancers, to emerge in the central space on the valley floor. The Hall of Choral Dancers, which had been virtually invisible from the upper zone of the entrance, now opened into an elegant Ionic winged prostoon stretching the width of the valley. Its centrality, scale, architectural elaboration, and date make it the primary destination. The scale of its deep twin chambers, however, remained hidden by the hillside; initiands would have to enter to appreciate their scale and purpose. The massive closed drum of the Rotunda to the north was as forbidding as the prostoon was inviting; here, too, was an interior that kept its secrets. Beyond

on a lower terrace to the north, something could be seen of the Anaktoron (or its predecessor), and along the line of the central torrent lay the view out to the sea. On the other side of the valley rose the fancy dining halls and votive monuments.

What could not yet be seen or known was the complex of buildings further sequestered in the valley to the south, especially the Hieron. Yet another circuitous passage was required to reach this most sequestered cult building with its internal cave-like apse that had further chthonic resonance.⁴¹ The Sacred Way, however, had done its part.

Passage 4: The return⁴²

Thus far we have concentrated on entering the sanctuary and encountering the chief stations where we might posit ritual action: the forecourt of the Propylon as the point of prohibition, the Eastern Hill as the threshold of sacred experience, the Hall of Choral Dancers as the central destination, and beyond, the Hieron as a culmination. Pilgrimage, however, entailed a round trip; returning was an essential part of the process. Following initiation in the valley and theatre performances and celebratory dining on the slopes of the Western Hill, the newly initiated eventually had to leave the *temenos*. The primary route in offered the only convenient way back to the ancient city. I have argued elsewhere that the Theatral Circle served as the final station in the pilgrims' passage through the sanctuary, and that the Corinthian façade of the Propylon of Ptolemy II was conceived primarily within the context of the impending departure of the pilgrim.⁴³ That study centred on the symbolic value of forms; here I would like to focus on the significance of the kinaesthetic experience.

Leaving the sanctuary after the initiation, in the light of day, the new initiates first had to relocate the entrance to the Sacred Way, for it was tucked behind the porch of the Hall of Choral Dancers (Figures 5.4–5.5). Their passage now involved a steady, eastward ascent. The climb out of the sanctuary required real exertion, all the more so after an experience that must have been both exhilarating and exhausting. Following upon the ordeals of initiation (including a ritual narrative – possibly enacted – of loss, search, and recovery, followed by celebratory dancing; some manner of disclosing Hermes' sexual potency; and a climactic revelation of divine light), the eastward ascent out of the sanctuary may well have put the newly initiated metaphorically in mind of an ascent and emergence from the underworld.⁴⁴ The first switch took them past the great Rotunda, its closed wall once again returning to the articulated gallery encircled by sacrificial imagery as the initiate emerged above the chthonic floor of the valley and into the upper plane of buildings. The next switch brought the Ionic Porch into focus as the destination, its floral coffered ceiling now seen to best effect. Passing from the channel cut in the earth to the pathway around the bedrock rim would have been entirely less terrifying in the light of day, particularly with the walls of the ancient city visible across the ravine. The Theatral Circle would again have offered a stopping point, a place perhaps for a last ritual act or for milling about in the company of fellow initiates and bronze forbearers. The last physical and mental push against gravity

took initiates straight up the ramp over the east ravine, into the broad Corinthian porch of the Propylon, through the narrow aperture of the door passage, and back out onto the open slopes of the hillside. The mountain continued its steep ascent to the south, but to the north lay the ancient city and the broad expanse of the Thracian straits. Now travelling under the protection of the Great Gods, we imagine that pilgrims returned to the harbour regarding these waters in an entirely new light.

Observations

From the embodied vantage of the pilgrim, it becomes abundantly evident that entrance into the sanctuary did not follow the path of least resistance. Builders worked with the nexus of gravity, terrain, monuments, and movement to intensify the experience of descent and ascent; to conceal or reveal certain areas; and to shape discrete, sequestered spaces that served as key experiential loci within the sacred space. Kinaesthetically and visually, the Sacred Way strongly preconditioned the experience of initiation. Its dramatic shifts of shape, direction, grade, and axiality compensated for the relative shortness of its length. Its downward trajectory had strongly chthonic overtones, culminating in the steep, chute-like passage cut into the earth. Even the Rotunda of Arsinoe appears to have been designed to emphasize the upper (terrestrial) and lower (chthonic) levels of the sanctuary. The pull of gravity and downward momentum governed movement. In staged descents, initiands moved between spaces that fixed their community (forecourt of the Propylon, Theatral Circle, area in front of the Hall of Choral Dancers) and passages that reduced them to singleness (doorway of the Propylon, passage around the outcrop). These oscillations spatially and kinaesthetically mimicked the collective yet personal nature of initiation. Manipulation of the complex topography played on the elasticity of the participants' perception of space and time, such that by the time initiands reached the valley floor, the city just over the ridge was mentally miles away. The experiences must have been disorienting and, I would argue, intentionally so, the goal being to break the connection between the mundane world and the space of transformation. The effect of each leg of the passage was to put initiands in a state of heart and mind to face the central rites and be open to the possibilities that might accrue from the experience. In attaching some topographic specificity to the pilgrim's passage through the sanctuary, we encounter the manipulation of the polarized values: descent and ascent, darkness and light, obstruction and revelation, anxiety and celebration, community and individual. These actions, perceptions, and emotions resonate with what little we know of the initiation itself.⁴⁵

Ancient texts tell us nothing about the passages, buildings, or monuments described above. And yet there they are, creating one of the most extraordinary entrances into sacred space in ancient Greece. In closing we may consider how the passage of the pilgrim into the Sanctuary of the Great Gods sets Samothrace apart from other initiatory sanctuaries. There is a symmetry in the way the two components of the pilgrimage – the sea journey and the descent into the sanctuary – engage the two guarantees of initiation that is distinct from its counterparts at Eleusis,

Thebes, or Lemnos.⁴⁶ Although there are important parallels between the Sanctuary of the Great Gods and the cult to which it is most often equated, Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, the passage of the initiand into the heart of the *temenos* was not one of them.⁴⁷ Except for one brief period between 413–407, the journey to Eleusis was by land, not sea.⁴⁸ Huge defensive walls rather than natural features marked the boundary of the Eleusinian *temenos*. The path to the Telesterion was a steady ascent, not a punctuated descent. Moreover, the difference of scale, between the single festival for some 3000 and the multiple re-enactments for a steady trickle of prospective initiates, emphasizes how strikingly different participation in each would be. These fundamental divergences caution against assuming that similarities of nomenclature signal similarities of experience. In matters so deeply rooted in place, the island deserves a chance to speak for itself.

Notes

- 1 For ancient sources on the efficacy of the cult, see Lewis 1959. An inscribed epitaph for a mime (Kavala inv. Λ70) raises the possibility that initiation also offered a better place in the afterlife; see Dimitrova 2008, 83–90, no. 29. I thank Troels Myrup Kristensen and Wiebke Friese for the opportunity to participate in this project; my colleagues at the National Humanities Center, Chris Witmore and Jonathan Sachs, for discussing the project with me; and Kyle Thayer, Matthew Herrington, Michael Musker, and Arya Basu for their work on the 3D visualization of the sanctuary.
- 2 Dimitrova 2008 for initiate lists. For evidence of filial cults elsewhere, Cole 1984, 57–86; also Rutherford 2013, 282–286.
- 3 For heroic and mortal seafarers and the island, see Blakely 2007; Wescoat 2013a.
- 4 Bowden 2010; Bremmer 2014; Burkert 1993; Clinton 2003; Cole 1984 with earlier bibliography.
- 5 Briefly, Lehmann 1998, 29–45. Also Blakely 2007; 2012; Burkert 1993; Cole 1984; Dimitrova 2008; Lehmann 1969; Nielsen 2002; Wescoat 2012.
- 6 Recent summary, Wescoat 2010.
- 7 E.g., *thronosis* (an attractive possibility for Samothrace although not specifically attested) has been located in the Anaktoron (Nock 1941), the Rotunda (Burkert 1993, 185–186), and the Theatral Circle (Clinton 2003, 63–65). For difference of opinion on the role of the Hall of Choral Dancers, compare Clinton 2003 and Marconi 2010.
- 8 Cf. comparisons made in Bowden 2010; Bremmer 2014; Clinton 2003.
- 9 This article is meant to complement Wescoat 2012, in which I address the semantic value of architectural form – circular structure and the Corinthian order – in shaping the experience of entering and leaving the sanctuary.
- 10 Rutherford 2013.
- 11 Emotion has become an approachable topic (Chaniotis 2011; 2012) although textual/verbal prompts or images have been the most comfortable territory for exploration. Emotion gleaned from archaeological evidence is a harder sell; cf. Masségia 2012.
- 12 For architecture, Jones 2000; Norberg-Schulz 1980; Olsen 2010; archaeology, Shanks 1992; landscape archaeology, Tilley 1994; 2004; 2010. For place as the nexus of experience, Tuan 1977, and for the human attraction to emotionally evocative places over those that are convenient, Tuan 2013. For recent investigations of the sacred, which privilege place, Feldman and Moser 2014, or architecture in place, Friese 2010; movement through sacred space, Hollinshead 2012; 2015; Petsalis-Diomidis 2005; 2010; landscape, Ustinova 2009; Wescoat and Ousterhout 2012; Williamson 2014.
- 13 *Contra* Bremmer (2014, xi–xii), who in questioning the universality of experience (e.g., Burkert’s discussion [1987, 88–114]), asserts that the Samothracian mysteries

- engendered no change of mind and long “catered only to sailors and their wish for safety at sea”. However, both Diodorus (quoted above) and a scholiast to Aristophanes’ *Peace* (Lewis 1959, no. 226a) speak of righteousness gained through initiation, and many famous initiates were not sailors (e.g., Herodotos, Philip II, Olympias, Arsinoe II, L. Calpurnius Piso, Varro, etc.).
- 14 Visuality as part of Greek religion generally is strongly acknowledged, e.g., by Kindt 2012; Platt 2011; Rutherford 2000; 2013.
 - 15 For kinetic gifts to the gods, Connelly 2011; *pompai* and the polis, Graf 1998; Mylonopoulos 2006, 103–109; Hellenistic procession, Chaniotis 2013.
 - 16 Varro, *Ling.* 5.10.57–58 (Lewis 1959, no. 175); “Probus”, in *Vergili “Bucolica”* 6.31 (Lewis 1959, no. 177); Serv., in *Aeneidem* 3.12 (Lewis 1959, no. 179); Macrobi., *Saturnalia* 3.4.7–9 (Lewis 1959, no. 182); Orphic Hymn 37 (Lewis 1959, no. 217).
 - 17 Greek sacred places more frequently drew authority from high elevation and panoramic view; discussed by Lehmann 1954, Scully 1962, and more recently by Williamson 2014, 102.
 - 18 A pair of altars within the ancient city could mark the passage, but the area has not been investigated. For the altars, see Bouzek 1985, figs. 96–98, pls. 110–112.
 - 19 Frazer (1990, 21–24, fig. 22, pl. VI) suggests that differently aligned foundation stones and some boulders within the tunnel of the Propylon may indicate an earlier structure, but that is the extent of the evidence.
 - 20 Phases of development summarized in Wescoat 2012, 70–79.
 - 21 Stones belonging to a terrace wall antedating the Orthostate Structure (chiefly visible within the Rotunda of Arsinoe) continue southward to the area immediately west of the Rotunda’s retaining wall (faintly visible on our Figure 5.5); McCredie 1979, fig. 6. The Sacred Way appears to be directed toward the west chamber of the Hall of Choral Dancers, which probably formed the core of an earlier building on the site; see Wescoat 2013b, 252–254, figs. 3–4.
 - 22 The text is entirely effaced. The combination of Pentelic marble for the stele and Thasian for the base signals a close alliance with the Dedication, which joined a Pentelic façade to Thasian side walls and krepis. Cuttings in the base indicate the stele was ca. 1.192 m wide by ca. 0.175 m thick. Dimitrova in Wescoat forthcoming.
 - 23 Pottery consistent with a date in the second or first century BC was recovered in sealed packing behind the north retaining wall in July of 2014. Given the loose construction of these retaining walls, it is possible that they were frequently repaired.
 - 24 Frazer 1990, 136–137, pl. IX; McCredie 1968, 231, pl. 17a; McCredie 1979, 4, 6–7, pl. 3b–d. No excavation has been conducted in the area of the ancient city walls.
 - 25 Frazer 1990, 135–136, figs. 86–87, pl. IX.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 116–126, fig. 80. He estimates a free opening between 1.882 and 1.982 m. The single, small entrance contrasts sharply with the open interior design of the north propylon at Epidauros, a building to which the Samothracian propylon is often compared; Roux 1961, 253–274, pl. 73.
 - 27 Frazer 1990, 137–142. The overall pitch was ca. 1 in 3.78, or 14.84 degrees.
 - 28 Following an earthquake in the late first or early second century AD, the region was radically modified; McCredie 1968, 232–233.
 - 29 Bovines could negotiate steeper (but usually considerably broader) ascents. Compare the ramp leading to the Athenian Akropolis, which had a slope of 30 degrees, but was 21 m wide generally and 3.772 m wide passing through the Propylaia; Hollinshead 2015, 47. For debate over getting cattle up the steep Lindian Akropolis, see Hollinshead 2015, 63–64.
 - 30 Reported by reliable villagers to E. Blau and K. Schlottmann, who did not see the stone because it had already been burned in a limekiln; see Curtius 1855.
 - 31 Graf 1998; Mylonopoulos 2006, 103–109.
 - 32 Cole 1984, 38–40; Dimitrova 2008, 245–246.
 - 33 Others (including Cole 1984, 26) have placed it in the Theatral Circle, but that is too late in the process.

- 34 See Video 1: <http://www.samothrace.emory.edu/visualizing-the-sanctuary/3-D-walkthroughs>
- 35 Wescoat 2012, 69, with references.
- 36 Clinton 2003, 62–65. While such a rite may have been essential to initiation, whether entry to the sanctuary in general was prohibited to those who had not undergone this form of preliminary initiation is a different matter. Such a restriction would have caused problems for the annual festival, which we assume was celebrated in the sanctuary and whose clientele may not have participated in the *mysteria*. For different proposed locations for *thronosis* in the sanctuary, see Nock and Burkert (above, n. 7). For Korybantes and korybantic activity on Samothrace, see especially Diod. Sic. 3.55.8–9 (Lewis 1959, no. 31) and Strabo 10.3.7 (Lewis 1959, no. 214). Note also Strabo 10.3.19–21 (Lewis 1959, no. 163); Nonnus, *Dion.* 13.393–407 (Lewis 1959, no. 69); Anon. *Paraphrasis Dionysii Periegesis* 524 (Lewis 1959, no. 170a); Eust., *Commentarii in Dionysii "Periegesin"* 524 (Lewis 1959, no. 171); Stat., *Achil.* 1.830–32 (Lewis 1959, no. 216); "Orpheus" *Hymn* 38 (Lewis 1959, no. 217).
- 37 McCredie 1968, 233, fig. 69e. For evidence of lamps in the sanctuary generally, see Lehmann 1998, 39–41, 140, figs. 16–17. For torch imagery, Lehmann 1969, text I, 135–137, figs. 89–90. For torch-stones and nocturnal rites, Lehmann 1969, text II, 13, 17–19, 31–32, 40, 54–55, 73–74, figs. 348, 365, 366, 384; Lehmann 1998, 39–40, 43–44, 64, 81, 86, 128, fig. 21. For use of light in worship, see Parisinou 2000, 136–161, particularly 158–161 for nocturnal feasting, which also was a part of the celebrations in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods.
- 38 Wescoat 2012, 94, fig. 3.17.
- 39 To follow this path in a 3D reconstruction of the sanctuary, see Video 2: <http://www.samothrace.emory.edu/visualizing-the-sanctuary/3-D-walkthroughs>
- 40 Hollinshead 2015, 19–24.
- 41 Lehmann 1969, text II, 35–38. For caves in mystery cults, Ustinova 2009, 226–255; necromantic cults, Friese 2010. Video 3: <http://www.samothrace.emory.edu/visualizing-the-sanctuary/3-D-walkthroughs>
- 42 Video 6: <http://www.samothrace.emory.edu/visualizing-the-sanctuary/3-D-walkthroughs>
- 43 Wescoat 2012, 93–99.
- 44 Story of Harmonia and Kadmos, Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 120 (Lewis 1959, no. 75). Sacred tale and disclosure of ithyphallic Hermes: Herodotos 2.51–2.52 (Lewis 1959, no. 140); Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.8.9–10 (Lewis 1959, no. 147). Revelation of divine light, epitaph for an initiate, Dimitrova 2008, 83–90, no. 29.
- 45 For emotional responses, note terror and fright, Strabo 10.3.7 (466c) (= *FGrHist*, 468 F 2) (Lewis 1959, no. 214); Orphic Hymn 37 (Lewis 1959, no. 217). Awe, "Orpheus" *Argonautica* 467–472 (Lewis 1959, no. 229). Faith and hope, Ar. *Peace* 276–286 (Lewis 1959, no. 226, 226a); Diodorus 5.48.4–50.1 (= *FGrHist*, 548 F 1) (Lewis 1959, no. 142).
- 46 On Thebes and Eleusis, see Nielsen, this volume.
- 47 See above, n. 4.
- 48 Dillon 1997, 41–42.

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6 Pilgrimage and procession in the Panhellenic festivals

Some observations on the Hellenistic Leukophryena in Magnesia-on-the-Meander¹

Kristoph Jürgens

The Hellenistic period is a fruitful one in which to examine the significance of sacred mobility and ritual movement in the ancient Greek world. This is especially true of the sacred Panhellenic festivals established in various Greek city-states of the eastern Mediterranean between 300 and 120 BC. Robert Parker has listed over 30 *poleis* that upgraded their local cults with Panhellenic festivals modelled after the four great festivals at Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea.² One of the main features of the new festivals was the endowment of large-scale competitions, with their agonistic disciplines and age classes labelled as iso-Olympic or iso-Pythic. As with the four *periodos* festivals, crowns were offered as prizes for the victors.³ Another distinctive feature was the proclamation of the festivals by travelling ambassadors, the so-called *theoroi*, who proclaimed the upcoming festivals in conjunction with a sacred truce to secure a safe journey of visitors and athletes, and called for the dispatch of delegates, also called *theoroi*, to attend the festival. Several scholars have labelled this system of *theoria* as a sort of ancient pilgrimage.⁴ Although sharing the conception of travelling with a religious motivation, Greek *theoria* did not promise salvation to the individual once the sacred destination was reached, as we see with pilgrimage in a Christian or Islamic sense. As Barbara Kowalzig has pointed out, Greek *theoria* was about tying the Greek communities together within an institutionalized framework of interstate religion in jointly celebrated festivals.⁵

As a general phenomenon within the Hellenistic festivals, the procession or *pompe* gained increasing importance in this period.⁶ An abundant number of cult regulations of the period are concerned with staging and choreography. Special emphasis was placed on aesthetic elements such as dress codes, the adornment of sacrificial animals, and the carrying of precious paraphernalia, as well as the participation of professional performers and celebrities. In this context, Angelos Chaniotis has written of the increasing theatricality of Hellenistic ritual.⁷

Besides the above-mentioned criteria, research has tended to focus on the social function of the Panhellenic festivals, understood as the conservation and communication of civic identity in response to the historical shifts that were affecting the Greek city-states as a consequence of the rise of the Hellenistic kingdoms. These new territorial powers significantly influenced the rather fractious commonwealth

of the Greek *poleis*. Although this development meant a diminished role for foreign affairs especially, recent research has shown that the Hellenistic period was a very vibrant period for the Greek *poleis*. Under the dominance of kings, many cities experienced political stability, economic prosperity, and cultural progress.⁸ In other respects, the Hellenistic period was characterized by the beginnings of convergence in the Mediterranean world, as a result of increased mobility and communication, into something of a cultural community. This overall development in turn contributed to a reflection of civic awareness among the *poleis*: architectural monumentalization emphasized the significance of urban space. The socializing, civic institutions of the *ephebia* and the *gymnasion* flourished. Historiography and mythography underpinned a city's ideal status within the Panhellenic world. The care of religious and cultic traditions also became a matter of serious interest. Against this background, a kind of 'globalized' festive culture emerged within the scope of the Panhellenic festivals.⁹ Following Adalberto Giovanni, the main purpose of these festivals was that of a meeting place for the Greek city-states for religious, political, economic, and social communication.¹⁰ For the hosting *poleis*, they provided an opportunity for self-representation and affiliation with a Panhellenic audience. Within this conception, 'state pilgrimage' and processions formed tools of communication among the celebrating communities. The system of *theoria* created performative links between the communities as they witnessed the festivals, testifying also to a shared cultural identity.¹¹ In the actual festivities, the processions were the main ritual vehicle of civic self-representation: besides the cultic meaning of leading sacrificial offerings towards a divine recipient, processions were carefully staged depictions or 'living embodiments' of a festive community.¹² The rising theatricality of Hellenistic *pompai* increased the degree of communication even further.

Because of the nature of the sources, the phenomenon of *theoria* is based mainly on text-based research. However, it is possible to construct an archaeological perspective on the processions. The establishment of the Panhellenic festivals was frequently accompanied by architectural and structural modifications within the hosting sanctuaries, as these responded to changes in ritual performance together with new infrastructural requirements that were appropriate for a greatly enlarged audience.¹³ The new festivals were also an expression both of civic prestige and of interstate rivalries that generated an increasingly monumental pomp and aesthetic for the structures concerned. Research has often stressed that the Hellenistic sanctuaries developed into conceptual spaces of performance and self-representation.¹⁴ This can be seen in the tendency towards holistic site planning and specific architectural forms that fostered ritual performances, for example porticoes, *propyla*, monumental stairways, altars, and *exedrai*.¹⁵ Closely related to the architectural structures, statues, votive objects, inscriptions, and images filled the sanctuaries and shaped these places into symbolic spaces of the religious and civic culture of a *polis*.¹⁶ Archaeology has the methodological apparatus to read such sacred topographies as 'significant spaces' of concrete cultic action, spaces in which the natural environment, architecture, images, and signs are interwoven with the sacred activities.¹⁷ If these elements are interpreted in relation to their infrastructural

functions and symbolic meaning, ritual movements can be made visible. The Panhellenic festival of Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia-on-the-Meander provides an instructive example for such an approach. The rich archaeological remains of a coherent cult topography, together with numerous epigraphic sources, provide the basis for a detailed reconstruction of the festive procession: not only with a view to its trajectory, but also the symbolic manifestation of its civic identity.

The topography of the Magnesian procession

In 208 BC, the citizens of Magnesia-on-the-Meander, a polis of rather mediocre size in Asia Minor situated in the Meander valley between Ephesos and Tralleis, established a new festival to their patronal deity Artemis Leukophryene in celebration of an epiphany of the goddess 15 years earlier.¹⁸ The festival was to be held under the name of Leukophryena every four years. It would include a procession and a sacrifice for Artemis, as well as iso-Pythic games with a golden crown as the victor's prize. Several groups of *theoroi* proclaimed the Leukophryena, from Sicily to the Persian Gulf. All major monarchs and at least 152 *poleis* and city leagues, as well as the artistic association of Dionysiac *technitai*, responded to the Magnesian request. The replies were displayed in the western portico of the Magnesian agora in an epigraphic programme or dossier which formed part of a simultaneously projected greater building programme for a redesign of the central places of festivities, i.e. the *temenos* of Artemis and the westerly-attached agora.¹⁹ The Magnesians charged the famous architect Hermogenes with the site planning. He designed the site as two coherent, peristyle plazas framing the main cult architecture: a new temple and an altar of the goddess.²⁰

Unfortunately, the universally known map of the agora and sanctuary depicts the state of construction in early imperial times. The Hellenistic period situation was much reduced (Figure 6.1). Before Hermogenes, the agora was an oblong free space of 1.8 ha situated within the orthogonal street network. One of the polis's main roads crossed its southern edge. North of the road a small temple was dedicated to Zeus Sosipolis, the 'Saviour of the City.' His cult image (now in Berlin) presented him as seated similar to the Olympian Zeus.²¹ To this topography, Hermogenes added porticoes along the agora's northern, western, and southern sides. To the south-west, a gap between the porticoes took account of the crossing road and formed the main entrance. At its north-western corner, the entrance incorporated a spring house.²² The *stoai* were two-aisled, with Doric marble façades and attached rows of small chambers that served as shops and stores. To the south-west, the peristyle complex of the city's *prytaneion* replaced these chambers. In the centre of the western portico, a small shrine was dedicated to the goddess Athena. This stoa also housed the already mentioned dossier of the festive inscriptions. On the southern wall these were inscribed over the entire height of five pilasters, while on the western side they filled the wall over a stretch of 54 m up to the shrine of Athena. The inscriptions were assembled in hierarchical order, beginning on the south wall with the foundation deed of the Leukophryena and an account of the Magnesian founding myth. The main body of the dossier consisted of the letters

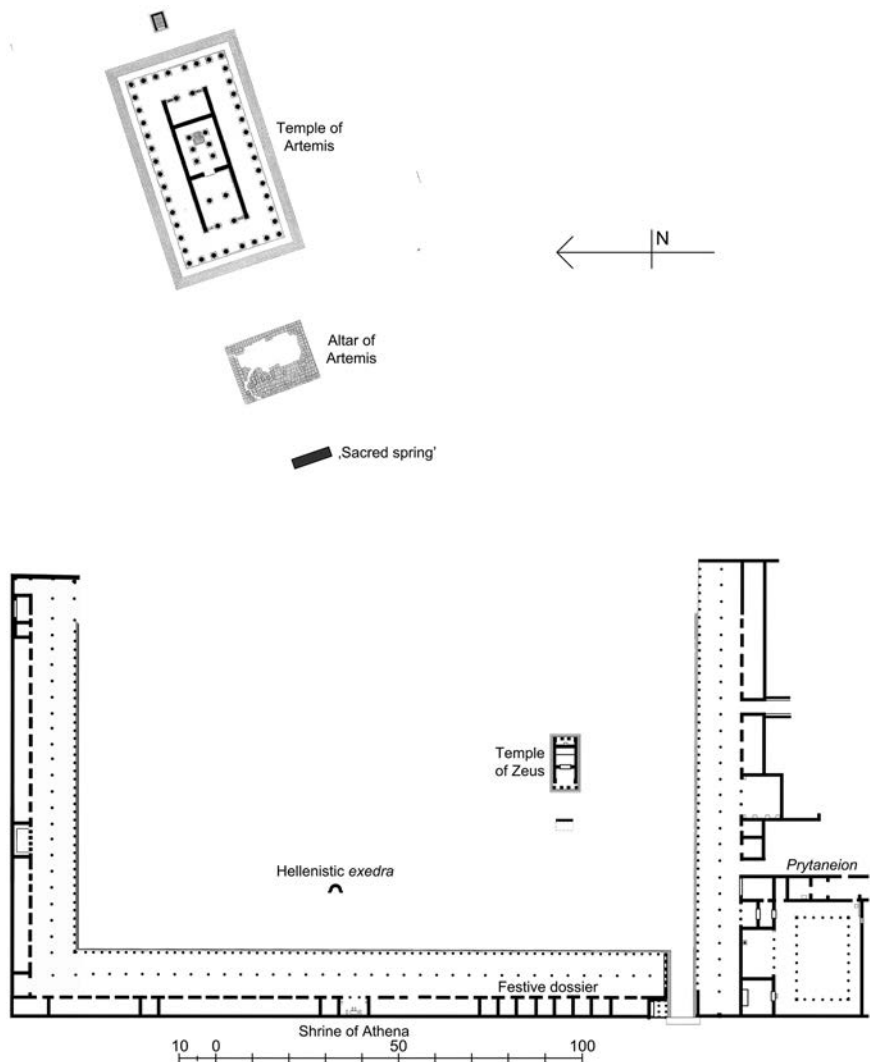


Figure 6.1 Plan of *temenos* and agora by the author, based on Humann, Kothe, and Watzinger 1904, pl. 2.

and decrees first from the Hellenistic monarchs and afterwards from the other *poleis*, city leagues, and associations.²³ In the deeply shadowed portico, four large windows in the southern wall shed light on these documents (Figure 6.2).

In the agora, once densely filled with small monuments, statues, and inscriptions, only the location of an *exedra* situated in front of the shrine of Athena is known. A monument of greater importance on the market was dedicated to

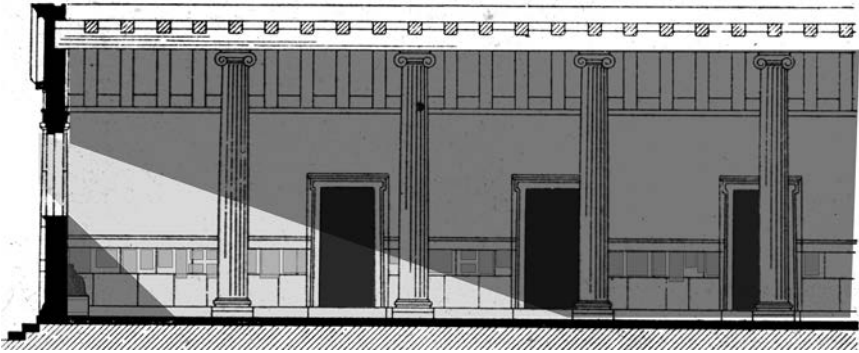


Figure 6.2 Reconstruction by the author of the light incidence on the festive dossier in the agora's western portico, based on Humann, Kothe, and Watzinger 1904, 116 fig. 121.

the Athenian statesman Themistokles. Due to the patronage of the Persian Great King, Themistokles had ruled Magnesia for two years until his death in 465 BC. In remembrance of his rulership the Magnesians established a hero cult and erected a *sema* on the agora. Now lost, this monument is depicted on Roman coins, showing the bearded statue of Themistokles with an altar and a sacrificial bull in front of it.²⁴

The *temenos* of Artemis is situated to the east of the agora. The aberrant orientation of the sanctuary from the surrounding areas derived from the orientation of an archaic predecessor (Figure 6.1).²⁵ The buildings of the *temenos* were aligned along a longitudinal axis and integrated by a marble pavement (Figure 6.5). In regard of cultic aspects, the altar of Artemis formed the most important building. Its base measured 15 by 23 m and formerly carried a high platform. A flight of stairs led up to the altar court.²⁶ The platform was equipped with a large frieze depicting an assembly of gods presenting the seated Zeus, Poseidon, Asklepios, Aphrodite, Hephaistos, Apollon, Ares, and Herakles.²⁷ In front of the altar, two rows of 22 bungholes can still be traced that held iron rings for staking the sacrificial victims.²⁸ Beyond the altar towered the Hermogeneic *pseudodipteros* of Artemis which, according to the Magnesian epigraphic sources, outshone everything that had gone before in 'size and greatness.'²⁹ By size (41 by 67 m) the new, oktostyle Artemision was the fourth largest temple in Asia Minor, competing with the famous *dipteroi* of Apollon in Didyma and of the Ephesian Artemis. The Magnesian temple shared some distinctive features especially with the latter of these two temples. First, both temples showed three door-like openings in their front pediments.³⁰ Second, the cult image of Artemis Leukophryene was typologically related to the famous *xoanon* of Artemis Ephesia, characterized by its strict frontality, its cone-shaped apron, and its *polos*.³¹ Another connection to Ephesos can be spotted in the reference to the Amazons in the circumferential frieze in the entablature of the Magnesian temple, which shows an *amazonomachia*, with Herakles and Greek warriors fighting the Amazons.³²

Some 21 m south-west on the same axis as the altar, a rectangular depression is situated within the sanctuary's pavement.³³ From the east, six steps lead down to an intersected ground floor: a water pipeline supplied the southern part of this, defining it typologically as a fountain.³⁴ The northern section has a pavement of limestone slabs around a large, raw rock.

Basing itself upon this topographic situation, the following section of the article will re-examine the Magnesians' processions for a plausible reconstruction of the processional route, based on infrastructural considerations and the symbolic structure embedded within the site.

The procession of the Leukophryena

We are quite well informed by the epigraphic sources about the personnel structure of the procession of the Leukophryena (Figure 6.3).³⁵ At the head of the procession was the priestess of Artemis, together with the eponymous magistrate, the *stephanephoros*. Cult officials led the victims to the altar. From the number of stake points mentioned at the altar, we can infer that there were at least 22 animals, probably bovines.³⁶ Servants carried the paraphernalia of the goddess, possibly accompanied by *xoana* of the Twelve Gods. Just behind them marched choirs, musicians, and acrobats, performing sacred chants and rituals. After these came representatives from the Magnesians' citizenship, ranked by age and social rank, starting with members of the *gerousia*. State officials and priests of the other Magnesians' deities represented adult citizens and the polis administration. Further divisions by age staged an exemplary enactment of the civic order of the polis Magnesia.³⁷ The Magnesians were joined by delegations from various cities and communities partaking in the Leukophryena.³⁸ By participating in the *pompe*, the foreign delegates confirmed the Magnesians' affiliation to the Panhellenic community.

As the deed of endowment indicates, the procession approached the altar of Artemis in a centripetal movement towards her sanctuary according to the definition of Fritz Graf.³⁹ The starting point might be identified with the *bouleuterion* just outside the agora, where the *pompe* assembled.⁴⁰ As with other Magnesians' festivals, the first part of the route might have led through residential areas, before the procession finally reached the agora's south-western entrance (Figure 6.1).⁴¹ The channelling of the processional route between the spring house to the north and the southern stoa marked this point of intrusion into civic space impressively. Perhaps at this point the procession stopped for a ritual cleansing at the spring house, in preparation for the sacrifices to come. Purifications were mandatory before entering sacred and political areas.⁴² Crossing the entrance to the agora was part of a visual strategy. Given the procession's spatial relation to the entrance, the temple of Zeus would have blocked the line of sight towards the Artemision.⁴³ As a result, spatial perception would have focused on the agora as an autonomous topographic entity. Once through the narrow entrance passage, the view would have widened along the porticoed façades, directed by the rapports of white marble and shadowy inter-columnar spaces adding to an impression of ever-extending space. Within the plaza, the shrine of Zeus Sosipolis was prominently situated, displaying

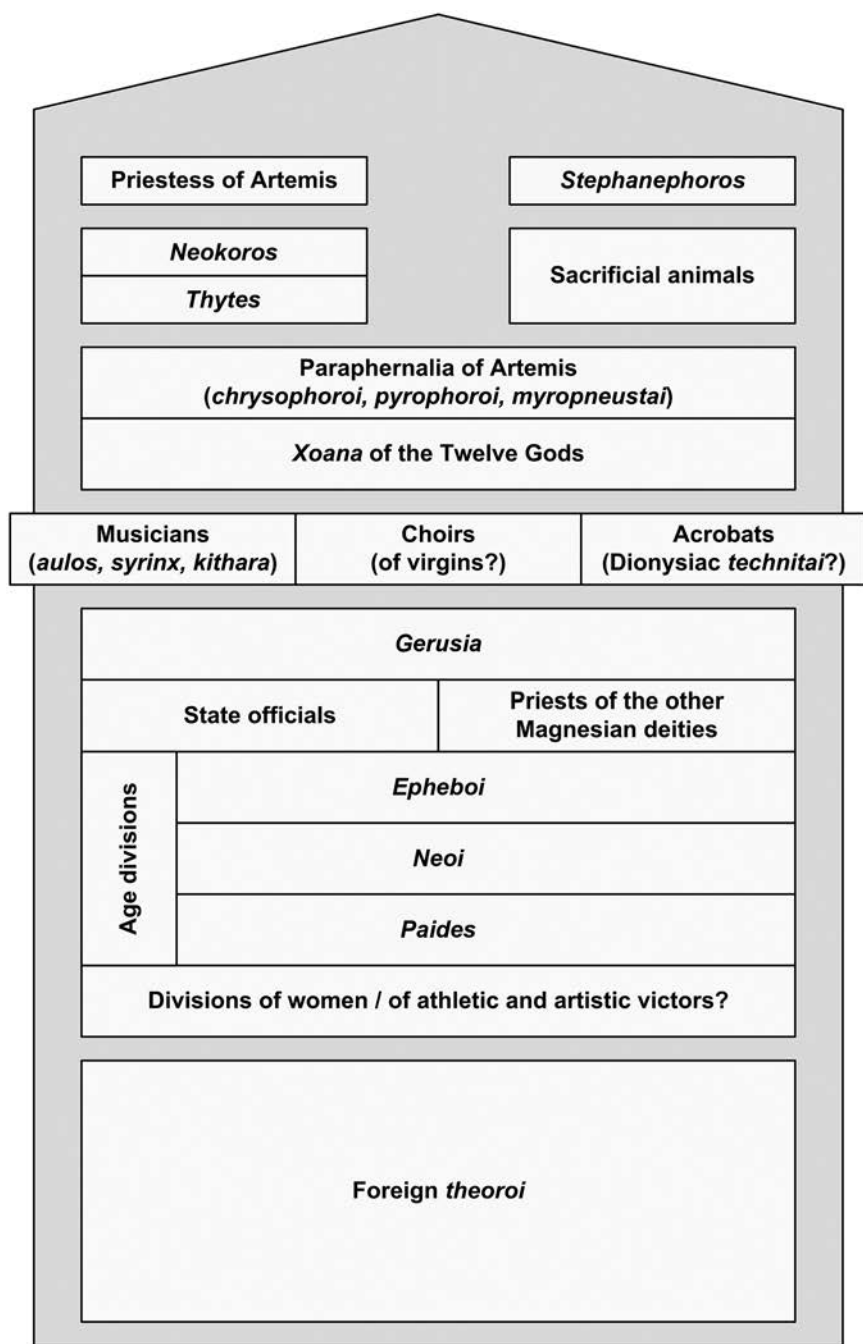


Figure 6.3 Schematic view of the procession, by the author.

its façade and southern side to the incoming procession. The god's epithet connected him to the political constitution and well-being of the polis.⁴⁴ His temple on the agora marked this cultic sovereignty, and the same message would have been picked up by the rhythm of the architectural order or *taxis* of the columned porticoes, evoking a sense of social and political order or *kosmos*, stressing the agora as the polis's civic centre.⁴⁵

After passing the entrance, the *pompe* had several options for its further advance. The temple of Zeus was probably the first destination. It would make sense that the patron of the place received a ritual reference, especially regarding the ritual cleansing just before. Epigraphic and iconographic evidence indicate that Zeus was a cult associate of Artemis.⁴⁶ Magnesian coins show Zeus's cult image holding a miniature of the *xoanon* of Artemis in his hand. Furthermore, the depiction of Zeus on the altar frieze of Artemis typologically refers to his *agalma*.⁴⁷ With the two temples located one at the beginning and one at the end of the trajectory between the plazas, a dialectic relationship between the cults, translating fundamental political and social aspects of the Magnesian polis religion into one cult liturgy, seems likely.

From here on it can be assumed that the procession's route followed the porticoes of the agora. In ancient Greek cult topographies, porticoes were gathering-places for an audience to attend the rituals which provided shelter from sun and rain. In this context, porticoes often focused on cult architectures and processional roads.⁴⁸ After the sacrifice for Zeus, routings along either the southern or the western portico are conceivable, but the latter option seems more appealing. As the procession rounded the shrine of Zeus towards the south stoa, the temple of Artemis would have come into view at a less favourable angle, seen from the rear. This does not seem appropriate, for Greek temples were commonly presented in an oblique view from the front.

So it is likely that the procession would rather have moved towards the western hall, where the four great windows drew attention to the stoa's illuminated south corner (Figure 6.2). This spot formed the starting point of the great festive dossier that played a crucial part in the conception of the Leukophryena. The dossier was a careful and highly intellectual arrangement of documents defining the position of the polis Magnesia in the Greek world. This claim was founded on the cult of Artemis and her epiphany, as certified by a Delphic oracle displayed in the deed of endowment of the Leukophryena. Mythological and historical relations, as well as the generosity of the Greek community, underpinned that claim, and created an overall consent to the Magnesian request for acceptance for their newly established festival.⁴⁹ Within the more than 70 letters and decrees, the Hellenistic kings, *koina*, *poleis*, and associations showed their affiliation with the polis Magnesia. The dossier not only confirmed and legally ratified the aspiring status of the Magnesians, but also made it physically manifest.⁵⁰ An emphasis within the dossier was put on the founding myth of Magnesia, which was prominently inscribed at its beginning. This narration was centred on the Lykian *heros* Leukippos, kin of some of the most important heroes of Greek mythology (Figure 6.4).⁵¹

In its mythological, political, and diplomatic complexity, the dossier wove the Magnesian self-perception into the fabric of a greater Panhellenic context.

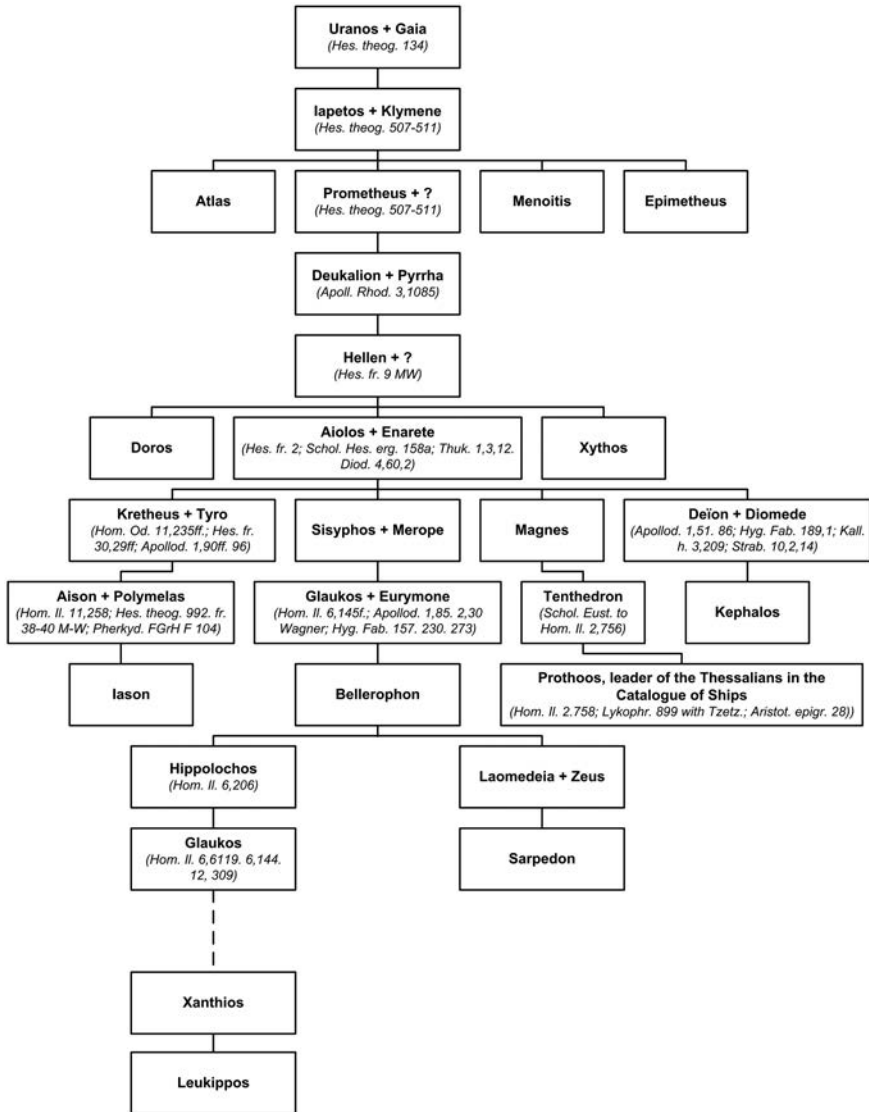


Figure 6.4 Possible genealogy of Leukippos, scheme, by the author.

Obviously, the many documents were not intended to be read individually in the procession. We rather have to assume some recitation or performance referring to their contents. The illuminated area seems a convincing site for such activities, as the most important documents were assembled there, i.e. the deed of endowment, the founding myth, and the letters of the Hellenistic monarchs.

Thereafter the procession followed the front of the portico northwards, as indicated by the position of the *exedra* in front of the Athena shrine. *Exedrai* generally were orientated towards routings and spots of interest, where they formed a sort of honorific seat.⁵² The Magnesian *exedra* can be defined as an architectural index pointing towards the sanctuary concealed within the portico. The shrine also marked the end of the great dossier. With a stop at this point and perhaps a sacrifice to the goddess, the extent of the dossier, which was invisible in the shadowy back of the hall, was made explicit.⁵³ One has to imagine the stoa densely crowded with spectators, making a view of the documents even less likely. According to Verity Platt, the dossier occupied 'an important conceptual and rhetorical space' directly opposite the *temenos* of Artemis, where it functioned 'as a counterpart and aetiological guide to the monumental altar and Ionic temple.'⁵⁴ In the architectural setting of the Hellenistic period, in which the Augustan east portico did not yet block the view towards the *temenos*, the temple of Artemis became visible soon after the procession had passed the shrine of Zeus.⁵⁵ The spatial relation between the monuments would have been strikingly obvious.

So far, the route of the procession over the agora can be traced with some confidence. Certainly, the *sema* of Themistokles was also embedded within the ritual *parcours* over the agora, as this could connect the Magnesian past to the Persian Wars in which Themistokles had played a central part. Such assumption, however, though fitting the general Panhellenic conception of the Leukophryena, must remain speculative. With its location unknown, we cannot say if and how the *sema* was incorporated in the festive topography. The coin depictions of the slaughtered bull in front of an altar might hint towards a bloody offering.⁵⁶

The further approach of the *pompe* from the agora towards the *temenos* would have framed the cult buildings of the altar and the *pseudodipteros* in an angled view, noticeably contrasting with the orthogonal designed surroundings (Figure 6.1). This surely would have emphasized the above-mentioned seniority of the sanctuary, as well as the spatial hierarchy between agora and *temenos*. Reconstructing the further trajectory, the staging of the mythological origins of the cult of Artemis was the main intention of this part of the route. For the Hellenistic period, the point where the procession finally transgressed into the sanctuary is unclear, although the later structures of the Augustan *propylon* and a second century AD assembly place indicate an entrance within the central axis of the sanctuary.⁵⁷ As Bernhard Schmaltz proposed, such an entrance point would foster a *point de vue* perspective on the *temenos*, formed of 'symmetries, building lines, and staggering arrangement' common in Hellenistic Greek site planning.⁵⁸ In this view, the main cult architectures of the sacred spring, the altar, and the new Artemision would have merged in one perspective layer.

This effect, however, would have been built up in stages over the course of the festival. We have to imagine, as the procession approached the sanctuary, the sacrificial fire on the altar already burning and the ascending smoke obscuring the view of the temple. Only the spring and the altar beyond would have been fully visible at this point. From the front, the monumental flight of steps leading to the altar platform not only would have formed a visual focus that attracted the processional movement, but also would have conspicuously elevated the place of sacrifice as the centre of sacred enactment against the surroundings.⁵⁹ The assembly of

divinities at the altar defined the concentrated religious atmosphere of the sanctuary, in contrast to the just-passed agora. Furthermore, the frieze referred not merely to the canonical Greek pantheon, but also to the administrative units of the Magnesian *phylai*, connecting local polis traditions to a greater Panhellenic background. Against this architectural and symbolic scenery, the depression, with the water spring and the raw rock, formed the first station of the procession in the sanctuary. Following Orhan Bingöl, we can address this structure as some sort of sacred *sema*.⁶⁰ Springs and rock formations are commonly known landmarks referring to mythological events or prehistoric cults. One possible explanation of the spring might be a reference to the thermal springs or sacred lake mentioned by Xenophon in connection with the sanctuary in the fifth century BC.⁶¹ Another interpretation might be as burial place for the eponymous heroine Leukophryne, a burial site that was, according to Zenon of Myndos, situated in the Magnesian *temenos*.⁶² It remains unclear how the procession interacted with this monument, although the spring situation might indicate another act of purification for the upcoming sacrifice for Artemis. However, its position directly *en route* of the trajectory and its access orientated towards the altar suggest that the *pompe* circumambulated this *sema*. Rounding the altar, the procession finally reached the temple of Artemis. According to the sources, the Artemision was considered the pride of the Magnesian citizens. Besides its architectural aesthetic, the temple was also the symbolic centrepiece of the *temenos*, staging the deep-rooted cult traditions of Artemis Leukophryene framed within the pediment doors and the amazonomachy frieze. The doors originated from indigenous Phrygian and Carian sacral architecture, and served as epiphany doors for staged apparitions of the goddess.⁶³ In the temple architecture of Asia Minor, such doors first occurred in the early Hellenistic period and hinted towards an ancient and venerable cult with indigenous origins.⁶⁴ Another reference to a regional cult milieu was the amazonomachy in the entablature. Besides the common interpretation of the frieze as an emblematic depiction of the universal struggle between Greek order and barbarian disorder, a more contextual reading connects it to the prominent Asiatic myth of the Amazon migration from the Black Sea to Asia Minor. In reference to this myth, various Greek settlements and cults all over Asia Minor were traced back to Amazon founders.⁶⁵ Thanks to a literary quote, we know that the Amazon played an unclear but nonetheless significant role in Magnesian mythology.⁶⁶ Maybe an Amazon founder can be suspected behind the eponymous heroine Leukophryne. The appearance of Herakles draws the depiction of the frieze further into the Panhellenic myth of the Argonauts, as several ancient authors report that it was Herakles as a companion of the Argonauts who exiled the Amazons from their homelands.⁶⁷ The significance of this tradition in Magnesia is literarily attested: there were ancestral bonds between the Magnesian founder Leukippos and Iason, the leader of the Argonauts. In addition, Leukippos's progenitor, Glaukos, was the carpenter and helmsman of the ship *Argo* (Figure 6.4).⁶⁸ It seems that the topic of the frieze was carefully chosen, for it allows a universal readability, but also includes references that, again, set the Magnesian mythology in an Asiatic as well as a Panhellenic context.⁶⁹ It seems that its presentation was a particular concern. While the pediment doors were a conspicuous element throughout the *temenos*, the perception of the frieze needed a close-up view. Peter Hommel showed that the frieze of the Artemision

was squared for view from an angle diagonally below.⁷⁰ In fact, for perceiving the frieze procession the procession was forced to converge on the temple. After a possible rounding or passing of the temple, the sacrifice would have been offered in front of the altar, where the animals were staked. At this point the members of the procession together with the audience would probably have gathered in a semicircle around the altar to attend the ritual. There they would have had a direct view of the ritual at the altar. After the offering and the burning of the goddess's portion, we can expect that the smoke from the burning sacrificial flame on the altar slowly dispersed and revealed the temple beyond. As indicated above, in this moment the altar and the *pseudodipteros* would have formed a coherent scenery of monumental, iconographical, and symbolic elements, forming a narrative of hierarchically ordered themes constitutive of the cult of Artemis (Figure 6.5).

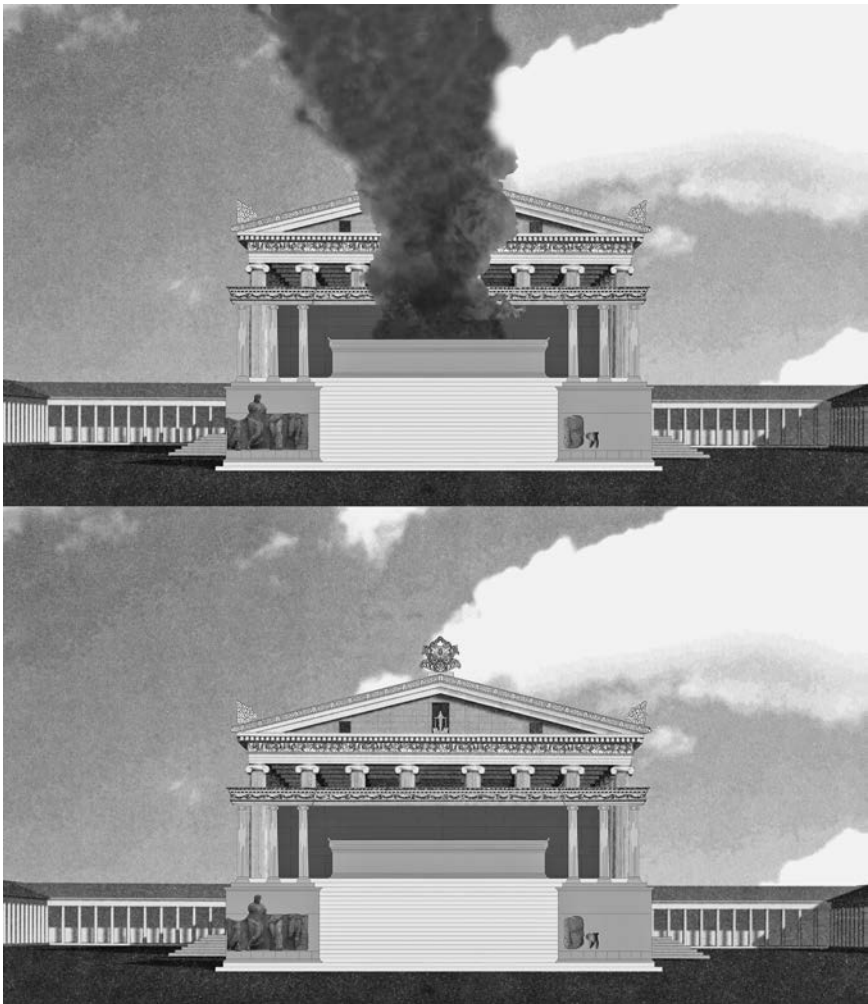


Figure 6.5 Centralized view of the *temenos* structures, montage by the author, based on Humann, Kothe and Watzinger 1904, 95 fig. 93; Schmaltz 1995, folded plan.

At the bottom, the altar frieze of the divine assembly represented the religious basis of the Magnesian citizenry, structured by its *phylai* constitution in accordance with the Greek Twelve Gods. Above, in the temple's entablature, the *amazonomachia* intertwined local mythology with regional and Panhellenic traditions. At the topmost point, the pediment doors framed an apparition of the goddess herself. If we accept Carl Humann's proposal, an image of the Artemis was presented to her devotees as they re-staged the epiphany from which her festival originated. Perhaps as the smoke dispersed the pediment doors opened, implying that the goddess had accepted the sacrifice from her devotees (Figure 6.5). The elevated position of this staging clearly points to the predominant role of Artemis Leukophryene as the divine patron of Magnesia.

Conclusion

Archaeological approaches have an important share in the reconstruction of ritual movements in ancient Greek festive culture. On the one hand, they provide methods to reconstruct processional trajectories from the infrastructural settings of the sacred topographies. On the other hand, archaeology can read and interpret the symbolic relations between the spatial setting and its monuments in accordance with the festive performances. For these reasons the Panhellenic festivals of the Hellenistic period are an attractive field of research. Against the background of historical development, these festivals expressed both civic awareness and a shared Greek identity through institutionalized 'state pilgrimage' and processions. Social communication was supported by the increasing theatricality of Hellenistic ritual, which also manifested itself in ambitious, representative building programmes within the hosting sanctuaries. In this chapter, methodological and theoretical capabilities for an archaeological approach to Panhellenic festive culture were exemplarily discussed for the procession for Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia-on-the-Meander. From the architectural and monumental topography of the festival, an infrastructural and visual guideline of the procession towards the altar of Artemis was suggested. This routing marked a spatial hierarchy leading towards the sacred, focused on structures, images, and inscriptions referencing the civic Magnesian identity. The main concern was the relationship, at once mythological and historical, with the Panhellenic world. These links were drawn into the recent present to stress the actual pertinence of the Panhellenic connection to the Greek audience. Emphasis was placed upon the city's chief goddess, her venerability, and her time-honoured cult. The line-up of the *pompe* reflected the Magnesians' intent: on the one hand, to present themselves as a well-ordered and harmonious civic body; on the other, to integrate participants from all the invited *poleis* to ritually perform Panhellenic affiliation.

Notes

- 1 This article developed from my recent PhD project on the Magnesian festival of Artemis Leukophryene that is generously supported by the Berlin Graduate School of Ancient Studies and the Excellence Cluster Topoi. Special thanks I owe to the following people: To Orhan Bingöl, director of the Magnesia excavation, who helped me in the most friendly way in word and deed during my several stays on the site; to Boris Dreyer

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- 2 Parker 2004, 18–22. Compare Chaniotis 1995, 64–168. For an overview on the phenomenon: Robert 1989, 35–45. Introductory on ancient Greek festive culture with further literature: Chaniotis 2011, 4–43.
 - 3 Parker 2004, 11–12.
 - 4 Boesch 1908; Dillon 1997; Rutherford 2013. On the definitional problem of the term ‘pilgrimage’ for the Greek world: Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 1–14; and see introduction, this volume.
 - 5 Kowalzig 2005, 43–44. Compare Rutherford 2007, 23–27; 2013, *passim*.
 - 6 On Hellenistic processions: Chaniotis 1995, 158–160; 2011, 40–43; 2013, 21–47; Chankowski 2005, 204–206; Viviers 2010, 163–183; Wiemer 2009a, 116–118.
 - 7 Angelos Chaniotis defines theatricality as the effort to evoke emotional impacts on an audience to achieve a certain reaction to or perception of sacral conditions through non-verbal communication such as performance, people, physical structure, or space: Chaniotis 2013, 173–174.
 - 8 On the Hellenistic polis: Gehrke 2007; Giovanni 1993; Gruen 1993; Harland 2006, 21–49; van Nijf 2013, 311–232.
 - 9 Parker 2004, 9–17; van Nijf 2012, 70–75; 2013, 329–331.
 - 10 Giovanni 1993, 280–283.
 - 11 Kowalzig 2005, 41–72.
 - 12 Quoted after Wiemer 2009a, 118. Compare Chaniotis 1995, 160–163; 2013, 39–42; Chankowski 2005, 185–206; Graf 1996, 55–65; Viviers 2010, 163–183; Wiemer 2009b, 83–108.
 - 13 Compare the Asklepieion on Kos: Gruben 2001, 440–448. In Didyma: Günther 1971, 100–107. In Dodona: Gruben 2001, 116–118.
 - 14 Hesberg 1994, 78–88; Mylonopoulos 2008, 49–60; 2011, 43–56; Zimmermann 2009, 23–40. Compare Wescoat, this volume.
 - 15 Becker 2003, 298–302; Hesberg 1994, 4–29; Hollinshead 2012, 27–66; Linfert 1995, 131–146; Thüngen 1994, 30–47.
 - 16 On images: Hesberg 1994, 97–114. On honorific monuments: Bielfeldt 2012, 78–122; Ma 2013. On inscriptions: Davies 2003, 333–340.
 - 17 Hölscher 2002, 331.
 - 18 On the date of endowment: Thonemann 2007, 151–160. He argues that the Magnesians festival competed with the restored festival of Apollon in Didyma in 218/217 BC. To assert their festival’s greater age and importance, the Magnesians invented an earlier date of endowment for the Leukophryena.
 - 19 Humann *et al.* 1904, pl. 2.
 - 20 Vit. 3.2.6. On the design of the plazas: Doxiadis 1937, 47–51.
 - 21 Humann *et al.* 1904, 141–157; Rumscheid 1994, 170.
 - 22 Humann *et al.* 1904, 109–110.
 - 23 For the arrangement of the inscriptions see the commentary on *I. Magn.* 16–86 pl. 2. Compare Kern 1901, 491–515; Rigsby 1996, 193–279, nr. 68–131.
 - 24 On this monument: Malkin 1987, 223–228; Schultz 1975, cat. 103.
 - 25 Humann *et al.* 1904, 46–49.
 - 26 On the archaeological remains: Humann *et al.* 1904, 91–99. The reconstruction of the Magnesians altar on the model of the Pergamene great altar of Zeus was propagated by Armin von Gerkan (1929) and recently confirmed by Thomas Becker (2003, 199–200), against its characterization as a court altar by Wolfram Hoepfner (1989, 603–618).
 - 27 Humann *et al.* 1904, 175–182.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, 91–92.

- 29 *I. Magn.* 100a1. 14–16.
- 30 Humann *et al.* 1904, 63–64.
- 31 Fleischer 1973, 140–146.
- 32 Humann *et al.* 1904, 39–90; Rumscheid 1994, 198–214. On the frieze: Yaylalı 1976.
- 33 Bingöl 2007a, 84–85.
- 34 Similar structures are found on Delos: Bruneau 2005, 196 no. 30.
- 35 Although there is no explicit literary evidence about this procession we can confidently draw some conclusions from the other well attested Magnesian *pompai* of the festivals of Eisiteria and for Zeus Sosipolis (*I. Magn.* 98. 100a. 100b): Sumi 2004, 86; Wiemer 2009a, 123–125. Compare also above n. 6.
- 36 See above n. 28.
- 37 Chankowski 2005, 202–203; Viviers 2010, 166–171; Wiemer 2009a, 125–127.
- 38 *I. Magn.* 221. 19. 311. 31. 321. 29. 331. 24. 451. 33. 481. 19. 551. 21. 661. 5. 861. 16.
- 39 *I. Magn.* 161. 20–22. Compare Graf 1996, 57–59.
- 40 On the *bouleuterion*: Bingöl 2007a, 159.
- 41 *I. Magn.* 100a1. 41.
- 42 On ritual purification: Parker 1983, 19–25. On the installation of fountains and lustral stoups at the entrances of sanctuaries and political areas: Pimpl 1997, 49–61, 117–122.
- 43 Doxiadis 1937, 47–49 figs. 16 17 pl. 2b.
- 44 Kreutz 2007, 242–246.
- 45 Bielfeldt 2012, 78–122. Compare Hesberg 1994, 120–123; Zimmermann 2009, 32.
- 46 *I. Magn.* 981. 32–34. 49–51 reports that the priestess of Artemis conducted the procession of the Zeus festival. The festival culminated in a sacrifice for Artemis and Apollon in her sanctuary.
- 47 On the coins: Schultz 1975, cat. 145 pl. 11 cat. 170 pl. 14. On the frieze: Humann *et al.* 1904, 91–99 178–179 no. 14 fig. 183; 181–182; Gerkan 1929, pl. 5.16.
- 48 On the function of Greek *stoai*: Coulton 1976, 12; Kuhn 1985, 227.
- 49 Gehrke 2001, 290–296. Compare Chaniotis 1999, 51–69; Platt 2011, 151–153; Sumi 2004, 80–85; Wiemer 2009b, 88–89.
- 50 Davies 2003, 335–337.
- 51 The Magnesians adjusted their founding myth towards a more convincing, Panhellenic tradition embracing the Trojan War: Prinz 1979, 121–134; compare Chaniotis 1999, 65–69; Kern 1894.
- 52 Hesberg 1994, 122; Thüngen 1994, 36–39. As an example of the function of *exedrai*, see the situation at the West Gate Road in Priene: Bielfeldt 2012, 102–107.
- 53 A small cult table indicates food or incense offerings: Humann *et al.* 1904, 115.
- 54 Quoted after Platt 2011, 153.
- 55 Humann *et al.* 1904, pl. 3; Rumscheid 1994, 170–175.
- 56 See above n. 24.
- 57 On the *propylon*: Humann *et al.* 1904, 127–133, pl. 2 3. On the assembly place: Bingöl 2007a, 85–87.
- 58 Quoted after Schmaltz 1995, 138–140; compare Hommel 1957, 54. Compare the upper terrace of the Koan Asklepieion (Gruben 2001, 445–447 fig. 333) and the Asklepieion in Messene (Sioumpara 2011, 12–13).
- 59 Becker 2003, 298–302; Hollinshead 2012, 28–32, 55–56.
- 60 Bingöl 2007b, 417.
- 61 Xen., *Hell.* 3.2.19; also Athen. 2.42–43.
- 62 Clem. Al., *Protr.* 1c. For springs and rocks as mythological burial places: Pfister 1974, 457.
- 63 Winfried Held (2005, 147–154) connects this feature with the epiphany cult of Kybele. Compare Hommel 1957, 29–31; Humann *et al.* 1904, 164 n. 1. Problematic is Orhan Bingöl's interpretation of the pedimental doors as openings through which moonlight illuminated the cult image in the *cella* (1999, 24–35).

- 64 Held 2005, 139–147.
- 65 Blok 1995, 81–99.
- 66 According to Athenaios (7.296d), the local mythographer Possis wrote a history of Magnesia with one volume named ‘On Amazons’: Hesberg 1994, 109; Wiemer 2009b, 89–90.
- 67 Pind. N. 3. 36–40; Hellanikos, *FGrHist* 4 F 106; Diod. 4.16. A similar proposition was made for the *cella* frieze of the Apollon temple at Bassai: Lippold 1950, 201.
- 68 Ath. 7.296d.
- 69 Henner von Hesberg stressed the emblematic character of visual language in Hellenistic art, suggesting that interpretive levels within the iconology vary according to the individual viewer’s educational background and abstraction ability: Hesberg 1994, 97–100.
- 70 Hommel 1957, 54.

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7 Palimpsest and virtual presence

A reading of space and dedications at the Amphiareion at Oropos in the Hellenistic period

Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis

This chapter explores pilgrimage to the healing and oracular sanctuary of Amphiaraos at Oropos on the border between Attica and Boiotia in the Hellenistic cultural context. Aspects of pilgrimage to the Amphiareion remain constant from its foundation in the late fifth century BC, the Classical period, down to the late Roman period, that is, a span of about seven hundred years. These constant features include the space itself, the basic layout of the sanctuary, the identity of the hero god Amphiaraos as the recipient of cult,¹ the ritual of incubation, that is staying overnight in the hope of a divine visitation, and the offering of votives afterwards. But the meanings of pilgrimage are culturally specific, and here the focus is on the Amphiareion in the Hellenistic period, defined as starting in 323 BC and ending in 31 BC, a time characterised by a cosmopolitan Mediterranean culture, the dominance of the royal courts of Alexander's successor kingdoms, collecting and reframing Classical art and literature, and a new Hellenistic aesthetic in art and architecture. So despite the elements of spatial and ritual continuity at the Amphiareion it is argued that pilgrimage here in this period expresses important themes of Hellenistic culture, in particular the ideas of the palimpsest and of virtuality.

A definition and brief discussion of the use of these two terms will be helpful from the outset. The palimpsest, a manuscript on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for other writing, can be identified in the important new Alexandrian practice of scholarly annotation of Classical texts. It can also be seen in the widespread Hellenistic practice of the partial effacement of inscriptions on statue bases and the addition of new names. This latter practice will be explored in the context of the Amphiareion. But I also use the idea of the palimpsest metaphorically for the physical sanctuary, in particular the modifications of its Classical buildings and the addition of new structures. In what follows the palimpsest is defined as the layering of text and cultural meanings where older objects, buildings or texts are reused but their former use or form persists, either literally or by implication, and the fact of reuse itself has cultural import. The idea of virtuality is used for the evocation through text or material culture of spaces, objects or people not physically present. While this concept is not confined to the Hellenistic period, I argue that the new Hellenistic trend in visual culture towards illusion and realism intensified the experience of the virtual presence of absent things or people.

The palimpsest and virtuality are explored primarily through materiality, in particular the space of the sanctuary and votive dedications. I begin with an analysis of the space as a material palimpsest, paying special attention to any buildings put up in and amongst the Classical architecture. I assess the space in relation to developments in Hellenistic religious architecture, and consider what were the priorities of the authorities controlling the sanctuary at this period and how the space would have impacted on the ancient pilgrim. I argue that within the theatre there is a concern to create both a self-contained physical space and an illusory virtual space through scenery panels. In the second part of the chapter the focus is on dedications set up or reused in the Hellenistic period and I argue that these also instantiate the two themes of the palimpsest and virtuality. While some of the monuments are strictly defined as honorific rather than votive, the linkage with Amphiaraos by means of the spatial context and through the naming of the god in inscriptions is very important. In fact a complex relationship is established between dedicator, honorand, deity and viewer, in many ways comparable to a traditional votive dedication. As a way into understanding the meanings of fragmentary dedications I first briefly explore the use of votives in Hellenistic literature, in particular through collections of dedicatory epigrams by Posidippus and Nossis, and Herondas' fourth *Mimiamb*. I then discuss four examples of fragmentary material remains from the Amphiareion: an inscribed inventory of damaged precious metal votives to be melted down, dated to the late third century BC; an honorific sculptural monument depicting King Ptolemy IV Philopator and Queen Arsinoe III c.224–201 BC; a monument set up by Demokrite, a member of the local Oropian élite, honouring her father and son c.225–200 BC; and an equestrian statue of a Hellenistic monarch of c.300–275 BC rededicated to Sulla c.86–81 BC. I argue that these examples demonstrate a tension between physical materiality and virtual presence, navigating between preserving votives and honorific monuments as the property of the god, and the pressures to re-order, reuse, repair and ultimately transform them as material palimpsests.

The space

The Amphiareion, founded in the late fifth century BC, was controlled at different times by Athens and nearby Boiotian Oropos.² It is a rural sanctuary, nestled in a forest of pines, adjacent to a little stream overhung by plane trees. The rural setting of the sanctuary was not a Hellenistic innovation but it may have had greater impact on worshippers because of a deeper sensitisation to the landscape, in particular in relation to sanctuaries, in this period as compared to the Classical. Three pieces of evidence support this, taken in turn from the real built landscape, literature and the visual arts. First, the general phenomenon in the physical Hellenistic world of the deliberate manipulation of vistas through setting and architecture, including views of the natural landscape.³ Second, in the literary domain, the frequency of brief references to a rural setting, flora or architectural elements in Hellenistic dedicatory epigrams evoking idyllic sacred space in the countryside.⁴ Third, in the realm of the visual arts, the development of landscape painting in the Hellenistic period,

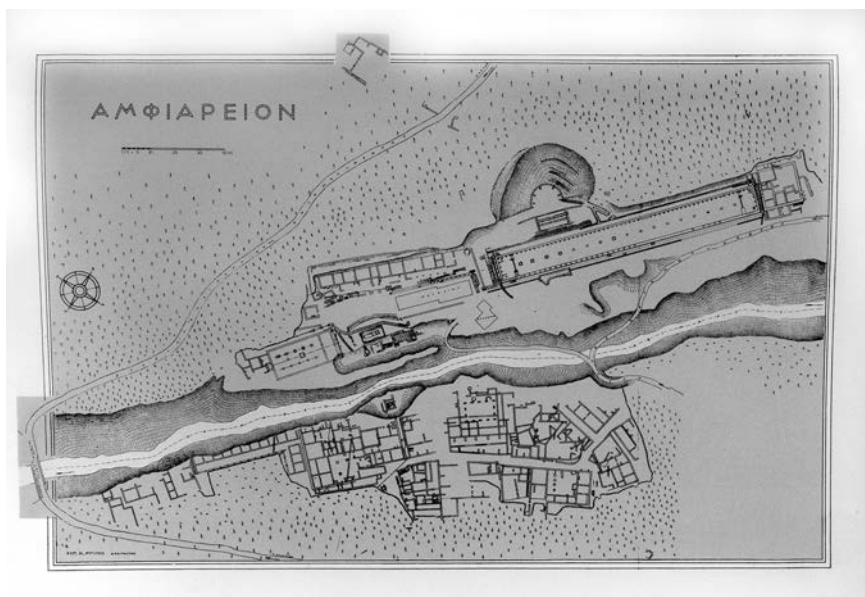


Figure 7.1 Plan of the Amphiareion at Oropos. By kind permission of the Archaeological Society at Athens.

and in particular the depiction of shrines and sanctuaries in rural settings.⁵ Marble reliefs depicting shrines give a new prominence to nature and the rural landscape, such as two well-known reliefs in the Glyptothek in Munich.⁶ In these reliefs the gods, the altar and temple are depicted in close proximity to detailed flora such as trees, and there is an emphasis on placing the shrine within the natural landscape in the form of a rocky terrain. In the context of the Amphiareion the natural landscape, and specifically the sacred spring, was intimately connected to the myth of the hero Amphiaraos. Amphiaraos was one of the Seven against Thebes, and when the expedition failed he fled from Thebes in his chariot. A thunderbolt from Zeus caused the earth to open and swallow him. He then re-emerged as a divine seer from the ground, specifically from the sacred spring of the later sanctuary near Oropos.⁷ The prominence of the rural sanctuary in the Hellenistic cultural imaginary may have enhanced the experience of the natural landscape and its intimate connection to the divine for Hellenistic pilgrims to the Amphiareion.

The material palimpsest of the Amphiareion therefore begins in mythical time with the epiphany of the hero from the sacred spring. In the Classical period the sanctuary took material and architectural shape (Figure 7.1).⁸ Buildings from this period include:

- (1) the hexastyle Doric temple, containing the acrolithic cult statue which made the god visually accessible in material form;⁹

- (2) the monumental altar surrounded by a theatral area, to help pilgrims observe sacrifice, that is the act of communication between humans and the divine;¹⁰
- (3) the stoa, a multifunctional building which offered a cool area for conversation during the day and benches for incubation at night, that is sleeping in the hope of a visitation from the god to heal or deliver an oracle.¹¹

Access to the sanctuary was from the east end, and pilgrims would have moved westwards past the stoa and beyond that to the area for the display of honorific and votive dedications, towards the altar and temple. In the Hellenistic period these older Classical structures were experienced as part of the existing sacred fabric of the sanctuary, the place in which past pilgrims had had extraordinary encounters with Amphiaraos, while new building activity indicates the priorities in this period. The only new project was the construction of the theatre which was primarily used during the heightened time of the annual Amphiareia festival (Figures 7.2–7.3).¹² Two fourth-century inscriptions mentioning thymelic



Figure 7.2 The remains of the theatre of the Amphiareion at Oropos. Photograph by the author, 2014 (by De Agostini / Archivio J. Lange / Getty Images).

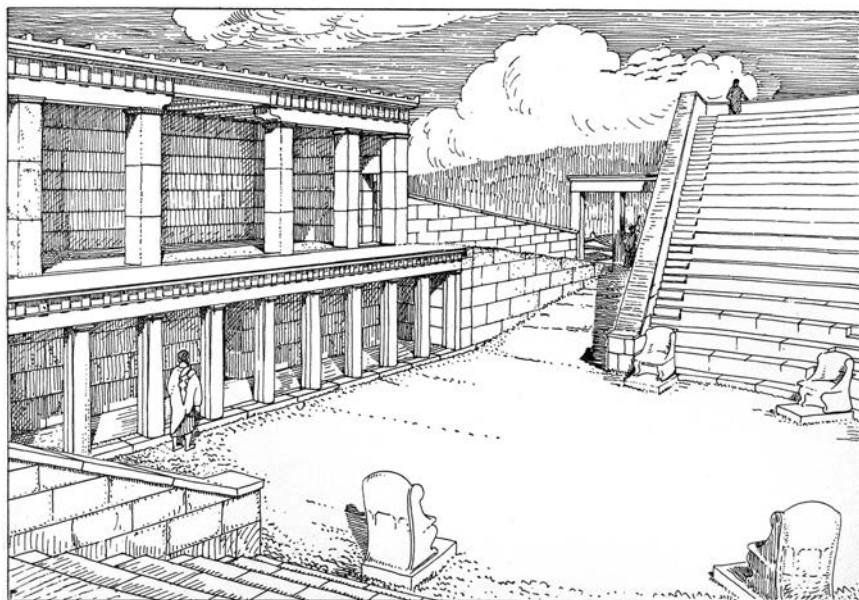


Figure 7.3 Reconstruction drawing of the theatre of the Amphiareion at Oropos. E. Fiechter, *Das Theater in Oropos* (Stuttgart, 1930), Tafel 8.

and gymnastic games at the festival do imply the existence of an earlier theatre, perhaps made of wood.¹³ However, the existing marble structure is dated to the third century BC and three separate modifications are also dated to the Hellenistic period which further monumentalised and beautified this structure: in 200 BC the scene building and ramps were built, in 150 BC the marble *proscenium* and the whole scene building were added, and in 80–70 BC five thrones were set up for priests around the orchestra. The *proscenium* was made up of eight Doric half-columns attached to piers with a half-column at each end, supporting the entablature with a triglyph frieze; pivots suggest a door in the middle opening into the *hyposcaenium* while the other spaces were filled with *pinakes*, that is painted panels presumably depicting scenery. Above this was the scene building. It is usually reconstructed with five *thyromata* flanked by piers supporting a continuous Doric entablature, probably broken over the central spacing. The fragmentary inscription on the architrave refers to the donor.¹⁴

In summary, the development of the sanctuary in the Hellenistic period was centred on the reconstruction and significant expansion and embellishment of the theatre. What was the effect on pilgrims? Clearly these building projects made the theatre grander, thereby projecting the wealth and success of the god and his sanctuary. This would have struck pilgrims seeing the theatre even when it was not

in use. The architectural choices made in the construction of the theatre would also have impacted on the experience of the spectating pilgrim. The *proscenium* and stage building created a more enclosed space. The combined height of the *proscenium* and stage building was 6.15 m,¹⁵ meaning that only spectators sitting in the very top rows could see over it to the bank across the stream. The vast majority of pilgrims were now in a self-contained space in which they were totally immersed in the spectacle. The *pinakes*, painted panels, could further conjure up the illusion of other spaces and times. Scenery painting, *skenographia*, like landscape painting, seems to have been invented at the second half of the fifth century BC.¹⁶ The building activities in the theatre, then, suggest a desire to control the viewing experience of spectator pilgrims by creating a more clearly demarcated and enclosed performative space. The construction of five handsome marble thrones for the priests on one level straightforwardly suggests the increased importance of priests in the Hellenistic Amphiareion.¹⁷ On another level it points to a deeper awareness of the priests as spectators, and indeed of the importance of all spectators as part of the spectacle, and a desire to visually mark the difference in their status through special seating that would be clearly visible to all pilgrims.

In addition to the new building project of the theatre in the Hellenistic period repairs were carried out on the Classical Doric temple at the expense of the priest Eubiotos and his son Demogenes c.150 BC.¹⁸ How do the building of the new theatre on the one hand and the repairs to the Classical buildings on the other fit into developments in contemporary religious architecture? I highlight three new trends in the fabric of Hellenistic sanctuaries. First, surprise and awe was evoked in the viewer through the revelation of unexpected interior spaces, such as the vast circular space at the Arsinoieion in Samothrace.¹⁹ Second, modern contemporary architecture was juxtaposed with old-fashioned Archaic or Classical elements creating an architectural palimpsest. While the addition of buildings in new contemporary styles in sanctuaries applies equally to the Classical period, the range of available styles by the Hellenistic period made juxtapositions more stark and no doubt intentional. Third, key religious images and ritual enactments were viewed in carefully contrived circumstances, often involving interactive viewing, such as the display of the Aphrodite of Knidos in a circular temple for perambulating pilgrims.²⁰ The vast temple of Apollo at Didyma exemplifies all these trends; it was a Hellenistic replacement of an older Archaic temple sacked by the Persians.²¹ It offered pilgrims an unprecedented dark corridor route into the temple, where instead of an enclosed cella they found themselves in a vast open-air space with a small old-fashioned tetrastyle temple at the far end. This arrangement would have evoked surprise and awe, and clearly combined cutting edge Hellenistic architectural elements with apparently old-fashioned Archaic elements. The main doors of the temple could be opened to reveal a raised platform, it is presumed for religious ritual enactments for the spectators below; this indicates a desire for controlled and dramatic viewing.

The first element of surprise and awe outlined above is not evident in the materiality of the Hellenistic Amphiareion, where the small Doric temple would have

been visible at a distance to pilgrims entering the sanctuary and contained what must have been a traditional frontal cult statue. While not experienced in the architectural fabric of the sanctuary as such, awe would have been experienced within the stoa building during the ritual of incubation through the epiphany of the god. The second two features of Hellenistic religious architecture are observable in the Amphiareion. Taken as a whole the sanctuary offered pilgrims the combination of old and new, in the preserved (indeed repaired) Classical buildings and the newly constructed theatre. It thus became a material palimpsest and expresses Hellenistic desires to preserve and reframe the Classical. It also created a highly contrived and controlled viewing space in the new theatre. Elements emphasised in this new arrangement were the central performance in fantastical space through the *proscenium* and painted scenery on the *pinakes*, and also the spectators as part of the spectacle itself, including the priests who were visually differentiated and honoured.

To conclude this review of the space of the Amphiareion: I have suggested that the rural setting of the sanctuary would have had added resonance in the Hellenistic period in view of the prominence of nature in literary and visual evocations of sacred space in this period. I have also argued that the building activities in the theatre and temple combine restoration of the Classical with innovative contemporary trends, and taken as a whole this approach typifies Hellenistic concern on the one hand with the Classical past and on the other with spectacle and controlled viewing. Developments in the material space of the Hellenistic sanctuary, then, engage with the ideas of the palimpsest and virtuality. It was not so much a case of the sanctuary passively reflecting broader trends, but rather of the sanctuary enacting and actively impressing these elements on the viewing pilgrims.

The dedications

This second part of the chapter focuses on the ideas of the palimpsest and virtuality in the context of dedications. The theme is introduced with a brief consideration of Hellenistic literature on votives, followed by an examination of four dedications from the Amphiareion.

Votives in literature

In the Hellenistic period there is a new focus on votives in literature. For example, they are prominent in Herondas' fourth *Mimiamb*, a light-hearted dramatisation of two women's pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Asklepios at Kos.²² The new genre of dedicatory epigram is a clear indication of a new and self-aware focus on votives in this period. The question of the origins and connection of dedicatory epigrams to actual votive dedications is complex and has received much scholarly attention.²³ Regardless of the origins of the genre, it is significant that Hellenistic epigrams were read in domestic contexts, whether really private or convivial sympotic, and not in front of votives in public sacred space. This means that even if originally some of these poems were transcriptions of real material votives, their reading in

domestic space established the idea of virtual votives and made it familiar at least to an élite audience. The frequent use of the deictic played with the idea of presence and absence, a virtual object and an oral poem.

The idea of virtuality is also to be found in the publication of collections of dedicatory epigrams to the same god, thereby creating a virtual tour of a pilgrimage centre. The 'Milan Posidippus' (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309), a Hellenistic poetry book dated to the late third or early second century BC, is an example of this: the first four of the dedicatory epigrams are addressed to the deified Arsinoe II (316–c. 270 BC), suggesting the viewing context of a shrine to Arsinoe, and the seven epigrams in the 'iamatika' (healing) section are dedicated to Asklepios and Apollo, suggesting the context of an Asklepieion.²⁴ A number of epigrams by the poet Nossis (c. 300 BC) describing dedications to Aphrodite may also have been published as a collection.²⁵ Herondas' fourth *Mimiamb* is another case in point. It creates a virtual pilgrimage through the Koan Asklepieion by means of the apparently casual commentary of the women on the votives, rather than through a description of buildings. These brief observations suggest Hellenistic literature on votives engages with the idea of virtual votives and virtual movement through sanctuary space. In addition to this thematic prominence, the idea of the palimpsest can be found in the very materiality of reading Hellenistic epigrams. This occurs in the insertion of reader's notes and *solia* in the margins of papyri, and more broadly in the manipulation of the meaning of epigrams through new arrangements in collections and the use of older inscriptional or literary models in composition, including epigrammatic variants.

The emphasis in these poems is not the appearance of votives themselves but instead the process of viewing and interpreting them. The dedicatory epigrams are not typically ekphrastic, and do not describe the objects in detail; also, Herondas' fourth *Mimiamb* is constructed entirely of the apparently naïve responses of the women to the votives, and does not offer any visual descriptions. These poems convey the process of viewing and wondering about the meaning of votives, focusing on issues such as the identity of the dedicator, the reason for dedication and the production of the object, including the identity of the artist, the manner of production and the quality of the artwork. This poetic emphasis on the process of viewing votives may well have informed the experience of Hellenistic pilgrims on the ground, including those in the Amphiareion.

Material evidence from the Amphiareion

The plethora of Hellenistic statue dedications, with many bases still *in situ*, is a striking aspect of the material remains in the Amphiareion. These were set up in the area between the theatre and the temple and include honorific and explicitly votive dedications. Unfortunately only some fragments of statues and pottery survive, but inventory inscriptions provide further evidence of votives on display in the temple. The sculptural choices in a statue's posture, clothing and physiognomy together created an impression of the person named beneath on the base. Material, size and the artist's name (if given) communicated something of the wealth and status of the dedicator. It is highly likely that some older Classical votives

found in the sanctuary were still on display in the Hellenistic period, such as the well-known sculptural reliefs with scenes of healing, apobatic racing and heroic feasting.²⁶ These offered visual access to past pilgrims and their encounters with the divine, miraculous or agonistic, intensified perhaps by the knowledge that the events shown had occurred on the same site as their depiction. The community of sculptural pilgrims on display was therefore diachronic.²⁷ And in amongst the older votives there were also fresh contemporary Hellenistic ones.

1. Inscribed inventory c. late third century BC

A number of Hellenistic marble stelai inscribed with inventories of votive dedications were found scattered throughout the Amphiareion. They are not of monumental size (the largest is 1.58 m high), most are fragmentary and their purpose is not stated.²⁸ They generally follow a simple listing pattern of dedicator and votive object, and in some cases the city of the dedicator and weight of the dedication is included. Comparative evidence from other sanctuaries suggests that inventories were made both for accounting and symbolic purposes.²⁹ They offer clear parallels with literary epigrammatic collections which effectively list virtual votives. Two marble inscribed inventories from the Amphiareion are explicitly related to the procedure of melting down damaged votives made of precious metal, one of which is the example examined here (Figures 7.4a–7.4b).³⁰ The stele is 77.47 cm tall by 38.1 cm wide and is surmounted by a pediment; on one side is inscribed the decision to melt down damaged votives and the process of doing so, and on the other is the list of votives to be liquidated.³¹ It is not known whereabouts in the sanctuary it was displayed as it had been removed to the nearby town of Kalamos when it was found in the nineteenth century.³²

The text conveys a remarkable self-awareness and self-consciousness in its specification that the purpose of the stele is to preserve the memory of the donors, their city and the cost of the dedications.³³ There is also a complex interplay between materiality and virtuality. The text refers in detail to its own material (στήλη λιθίνη, ‘stone stele’), its inscription and setting up ‘where it seems best’; in other words it highlights its physical materiality, the process of its creation, its visibility and context of viewing.³⁴ This has added resonance in light of the fact that its subject is the material status of votive dedications, in particular their damaged state, the process of their melting down and ultimately their transformation into a *phiale*, a shallow bowl used for making libations, in other words further (perishable) offerings.³⁵ Although the melting down of damaged precious metal votives was not unusual, neither was it a routine matter, something reflected in the fact that the decision was taken by the *boule* and *demos* of Oropos and not by the temple staff. The decree conveys a sense of profound unease at the prospect of tampering with the god’s dedications, while the physical materiality of the objects emerges as a concern in a number of ways. First, it is specified that all those objects which are repairable are to be repaired; only those that are irreparable are to be melted down and themselves transformed into the new vessel. This makes it clear that it was not a matter of getting the monetary value of the precious metal from a smith



Figures 7.4a–b Double-sided inscribed stele with inventory from the Amphiareion. Height: 77.47 cm. Width: 38.1 cm. Late third century BC. British Museum 1816,0610.378. © Trustees of the British Museum.

and depositing the money in the god's treasury: the material itself of the original dedication was to be preserved in the form of the new vessel. Second, it is specified that if some more money is needed in order to create the vessel the officials are to take it from the god's treasury and are not to use coins dedicated and displayed as votive offerings. These coins, which were still in circulation, are now regarded as the untouchable property of the god, and no longer a fungible commodity.³⁶ So while arranging for the melting down of certain damaged dedications the decree makes perfectly clear that this is the exception and other dedications are to be preserved exactly as they are. Third, the decree painstakingly preserves the memory of the original form of the object, something which is emphasised by its ordering them according to type and material: golden vessels and ritual objects, silver anatomical votives, vessels and ritual objects, tetradrachms, gold in the form of coin and uncast as ingots.

On one level the inscription emphasised the absence of the original dedications but on another it gave them a new virtual existence; it simultaneously pointed the reader beyond their verbal existence to their continued material existence, now physically welded together and transformed into the *phiale* in the nearby temple. The concern for the preservation of the material history of the sanctuary should be seen in the context of the practice of inscribing the names and cities of (now departed) pilgrims in the temple for anyone to see.³⁷ Public accounting is undoubtedly one of the purposes of the decree, but at the same time its creation of an array of virtual objects finds a counterpart in collections of dedicatory epigrams. These similarly created an array of virtual objects, with real or imagined counterparts, ordered on the papyrus roll, ostensibly for the preservation of the memory of the object and donor.

2. *Monument of Ptolemy IV Philopator and Arsinoe III, c.221–204 BC*

A marble base, still *in situ*, once displayed statues of Ptolemy IV Philopator who ruled in Alexandria from 221 to 204 BC and his sister-wife Arsinoe III (Figure 7.5).³⁸ The inscription is fragmentary but it is likely that the honorific monument was set up by the city of Oropos. John Ma's recent analysis of patterns in the use of space by the polis of Oropos in the Amphiareion for honorific monuments suggests that it was deliberate, organised and differentiated. In the esplanade between the stoa and the temple the eastern end was used for family dedications of élite Oropians while the western end by the temple was used for monuments of Hellenistic monarchs.³⁹ The statues of Arsinoe III and Ptolemy IV were therefore unusual in being placed on the right side, amongst the family dedications; this decision by the polis can be read as a desire to place them amongst familiar local grandees, and to make a bolder claim on them. The sculptures do not survive but the appearance of the heads may be reflected in the sculptures of the royal couple now in Boston, which were identified on the basis of coin portraits (Figure 7.6).⁴⁰ They are characterised by Hellenistic realism; Arsinoe is older looking than earlier Ptolemaic queens, with a protruding nose. While the monument in the Amphiareion was honorific ('queen Arsinoe' is in the accusative),⁴¹ displaying the royal couple within

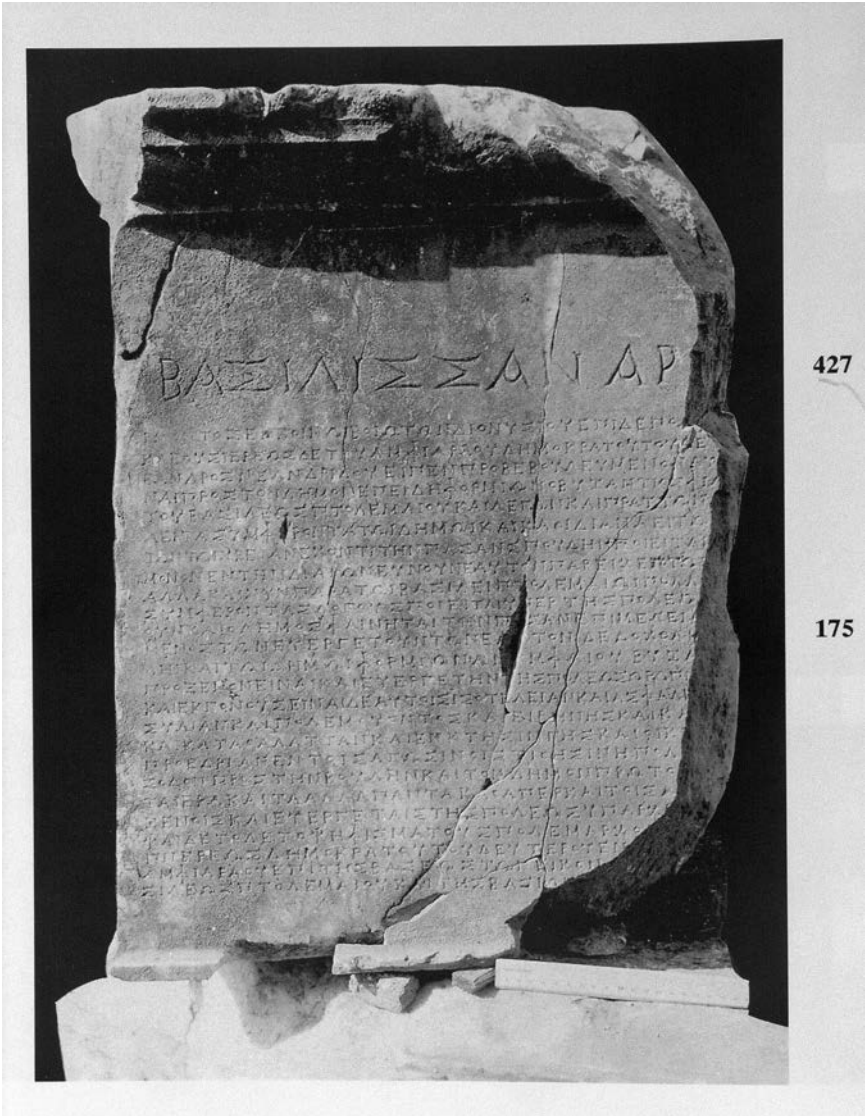


Figure 7.5 Statue base of Arsinoe III and Ptolemy IV Philopator with proxyeny decrees, c.224–201 bc. Courtesy of the Archaeological Society at Athens.

the sanctuary of Amphiaraos simultaneously evoked the idea of Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III as perpetual virtual pilgrims, though there is no evidence of their having visited. Depending on the knowledge of later viewing pilgrims the images may have evoked thoughts about Ptolemy IV's Greek literary and religious interests: he wrote a tragedy entitled *Adonis*, and founded the cult and temple of Homer in Alexandria



Figure 7.6 Marble portrait head of queen Arsinoe III, c.215 BC. Height: 35 cm. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Henry Lillie Pierce Fund, no. 01.8207. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

which is thought to be evoked in the famous Archelaos relief.⁴² Some pilgrims may have also been familiar with the Ptolemaic practice of deifying the royal couple. This included dedicating offerings to the couple, and this is reflected in Posidippus' dedicatory epigrams to Arsinoe II (see p. 113). For pilgrims who were aware of this

when viewing the monument the dedicated statues might allude to the divinity of Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III. There is also a particular connection between Ptolemy IV and the Amphiareion: another inscribed inventory dated between 200–150 BC mentions a gold *phiale* weighing 100 Ptolemaic drachmas (355 grams) given by Ptolemy IV to the sanctuary.⁴³ The inscription was found within the temple itself near the location of the cult statue. The gold *phiale*, then, had an actual and a virtual existence within the temple, while outside the sculptures fashioned Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III as perpetual virtual pilgrims, and possibly alluded to their divinity.

The monument of Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III in the Amphiareion is a stone palimpsest. Below the fragmentary dedicatory inscription a proxeny decree has been added by the demos of Oropos, and another is inscribed on the side of the base.⁴⁴ This practice occurs on many of the dedications in the Amphiareion, but in this case there is a particular connection between those depicted and one of the named *proxenoi*, Phormion, son of Nymphaios of Byzantion, who was powerful in the Alexandrian court of Ptolemy IV. It is noteworthy that this proxeny decree makes a point of specifying that it is to be inscribed ‘on the base of the images of king Ptolemy and queen Arsinoe’.⁴⁵ This decree may have been read by Hellenistic pilgrims like a scolion on the main sculptural monument, evoking the Ptolemaic court and broader Hellenistic geography in which the royal Ptolemaic couple operated. It also made strong Oropian claims on both the royal couple and their *proxenos*, thus inscribing rural and provincial Oropos into the wider Hellenistic world.

3. Monument set up by Demokrite, c.225–200 BC

At about the same time as the Ptolemaic monument was set up, and nearby it, a local woman, Demokrite, dedicated a sculptural monument of her father and son to the god Amphiaraos. In this case too only the statue base of the dedication survives (Figures 7.7a–7.7b). It was a private family dedication and the inscription reads:⁴⁶

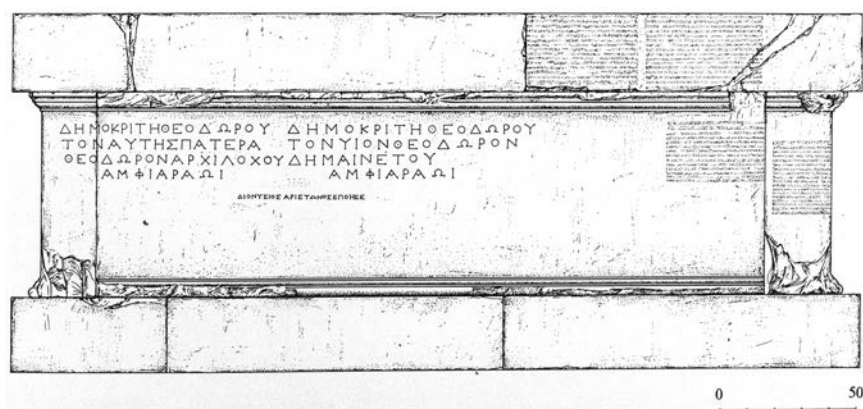
Δημοκρίτη Θεοδώρου	Δημοκρίτη Θεοδώρου
τὸν αὐτῆς πατέρα	τὸν υἱὸν Θεόδωρον
Θεόδωρον Ἀρχιλόχου	Δημαινέτου
Ἀμφιαράωι	Ἀμφιαράωι
	Διονύσιος Ἀρίστωνος ἐπόησε.

Demokrite daughter of Theodoros (has dedicated) her own father Theodoros son of Archilochos to Amphiaraos.

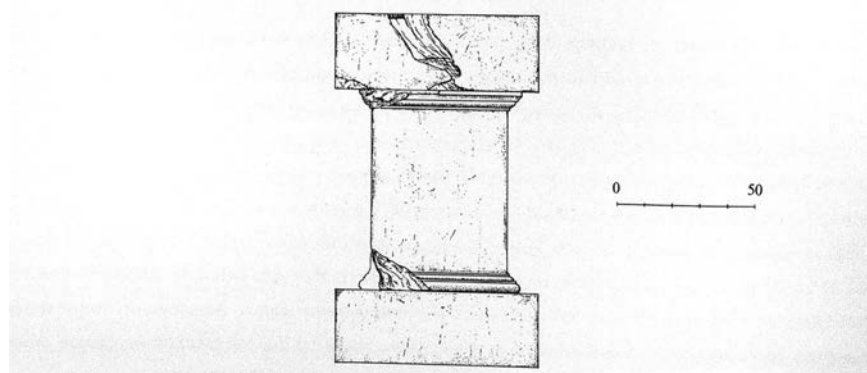
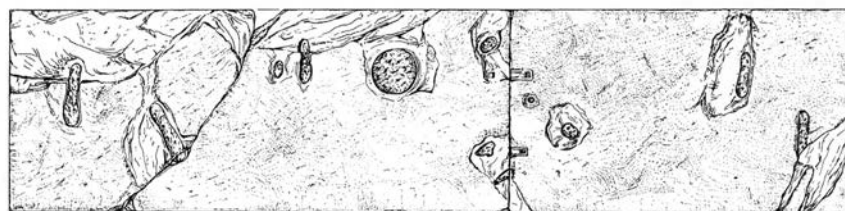
Demokrite daughter of Theodoros (has dedicated) her son Theodoros son of Demainetos to Amphiaraos.

Dionysios son of Ariston made (this).

The holes in the marble base suggest a male figure above the inscription referring to Demokrite’s father Theodoros (the latter is known as a priest at the sanctuary from another inscription); and another male figure above the inscription referring to Demokrite’s son Theodoros.⁴⁷ To his right there is a round hole, possibly to hold



a



b

Figures 7.7a–b Reconstruction drawings of the statue base of Demokrite's dedication with four proxeny decrees, c.225–200 BC. By kind permission of the Archaeological Society at Athens.

an altar; beyond that holes for a draped female figure (surely Demokrite, who is so prominent in the inscription), and finally a male figure, likely Amphiaraios himself to whom the Theodoroi are dedicated. A striking feature of the inscription is the prominence of the sculptor's signature through its central position beneath the two sides of the inscription and through the differentiation in letter size (it is smaller). The inscription would, of course, have been painted and thus more prominent and legible, at least for literate pilgrims. The web of familial relations is selectively presented here – in typical fashion the maternal lineage of Demokrite is not mentioned – within a discourse of civic and political competition and honours, a fundamental feature of the world of the Hellenistic polis.⁴⁸ But both the context of display (the sacred ground opposite which Amphiaraios rose out of the spring as a divine seer) and the inscription, which explicitly offers the Theodoroi to the god, render this honorific dedication equally a votive to Amphiaraios.⁴⁹

The evocation of the identity of the Theodoroi and Demokrite through inscribed name and sculptural image creates a virtual presence. The sense of ambivalent presence and absence of the named and depicted individuals would have been acute for a viewer in the Hellenistic cultural milieu for two reasons. First, familiarity with the concept of virtual votives through dedicatory epigram, explored above, would have sharpened the pilgrims' sense of the absence of the real Theodoros even whilst in the presence of his image. Second, full-length portrait statues were a new phenomenon at the end of the fourth century, both as votives in sanctuaries and as honorific portraits in civic space such as the agora. By contrast, Classical reliefs of healing, such as the well-known Archinos relief from the Amphiareion, evoke not so much the presence of the pilgrim as the process of the miraculous cure effected by the god.⁵⁰ The portrait statue evokes the absent person in a more focused manner. In the case of Demokrite's dedication, the absent triad of father, daughter and grandson are evoked and brought virtually into the eyesight and presence of the viewing pilgrim. At some point after dedication this triad was not only absent but dead and therefore only visually accessible through this monument. A statue of Amphiaraios would have functioned as a virtual shorthand sign beyond himself: on the one hand to his over life-size acrolithic marble cult statue a few metres away in the temple, and on the other to his real epiphanic presence in the stoa at night. In this sense the statue group is virtual. At the same time its style, which would likely have been that of Hellenistic realism, would have brought the absent triad vividly to life, thereby creating a votive of virtual pilgrim presence and pointing to the real presence of the god himself not here, but beyond, in his temple and later in the stoa.

In addition to instantiating the theme of virtuality this monument also became a stone palimpsest: the city of Oropos had four proxeny decrees inscribed on the right hand side of the statue base, in the same way that the dedication to Arsinoe III and Ptolemy IV has added proxeny decrees.⁵¹ Two of these seem to have been inscribed at about the time the monument was set up, and two are much later, after c. 150 BC. The size of the script is much smaller than the original statue dedication, thus indicating a different inscribing chisel, time and purpose. There is no attempt to disguise the subsequent modification of the monument, a theme which is further explored in the final material example.

4. *Equestrian statue of Hellenistic monarch transformed into Sulla*
(c.300–275 and c.86–81 BC)

The city of Oropos asserted its control over the sanctuary space and private dedications through the addition of proxeny decrees on existing monuments thereby modifying their effect. It also had at its disposal the more drastic practice of erasing part of an inscription and inserting the new names of dedicator and honorand, thereby radically changing the meaning of the dedication and the identity of the person depicted in the statue above. In the Amphiareion this occurred frequently in the first century BC, when Roman officials were honoured, including Sulla on the large equestrian monument by the temple (Figure 7.8).⁵² Patterns in the practice of rededication in the Amphiareion are observable: it is controlled by the city of Oropos, it occurs at least one hundred years or so after the original dedication is set up, and rededication does not occur more than once. The practice, widespread in the Hellenistic era, can certainly be read straightforwardly as resource efficiency.⁵³ But it is striking that the reuse is usually made very obvious by the big discrepancy in letter size between the old and new parts and by the positioning of inscriptions. In the case of Sulla's statue, for example, there are four different sizes of letter. In descending order of size these are: in the centre 'during the priesthood of Phrynichos' and further down 'Teisikrates son of Thoinias made [this]', both dated sometime between 300–275 BC and part of the original dedication; above these the rededication to Sulla by the demos, c.86–81 BC; and the proxeny decrees c.230 BC interspersed above, in between and below the larger inscriptions. This example shows the way that the Oropians reused dedications *and made it obvious that they were doing so*. The practice begs the question of what relationship was envisaged between the physical statue and likeness and the person named below in the inscription. The reuse of votives in this manner is double-edged. On the one hand old monuments were not preserved in their original state despite the fact that they were considered to be the property of the god and as such ought not to be destroyed or removed from the sanctuary. The alteration of the inscription could be seen as disrespectful towards the original dedicator and honorand, whose identities were erased. On the other hand, though, the statue which for years had projected the identity of the original honorand to viewers was still on display. Rededication can thus be understood both as subsuming the identity of the old honorand into the identity of the new one and as inserting the new honorand into a diachronic community of honorands dedicated to Amphiaraos. It speaks of the desire to preserve the materiality of dedications, within the practical constraints of limited space and dedicators and honorands who were long dead. It mattered not so much whose name was beneath the statue that had stood by the temple door for several generations but that it continued to do so. Rededication meant that these same objects were not cleared away and instead maintained their high status as the image of the current élite. These stone palimpsests, in making their reuse obvious, evoked the virtual presences of their original dedicators and honorands.

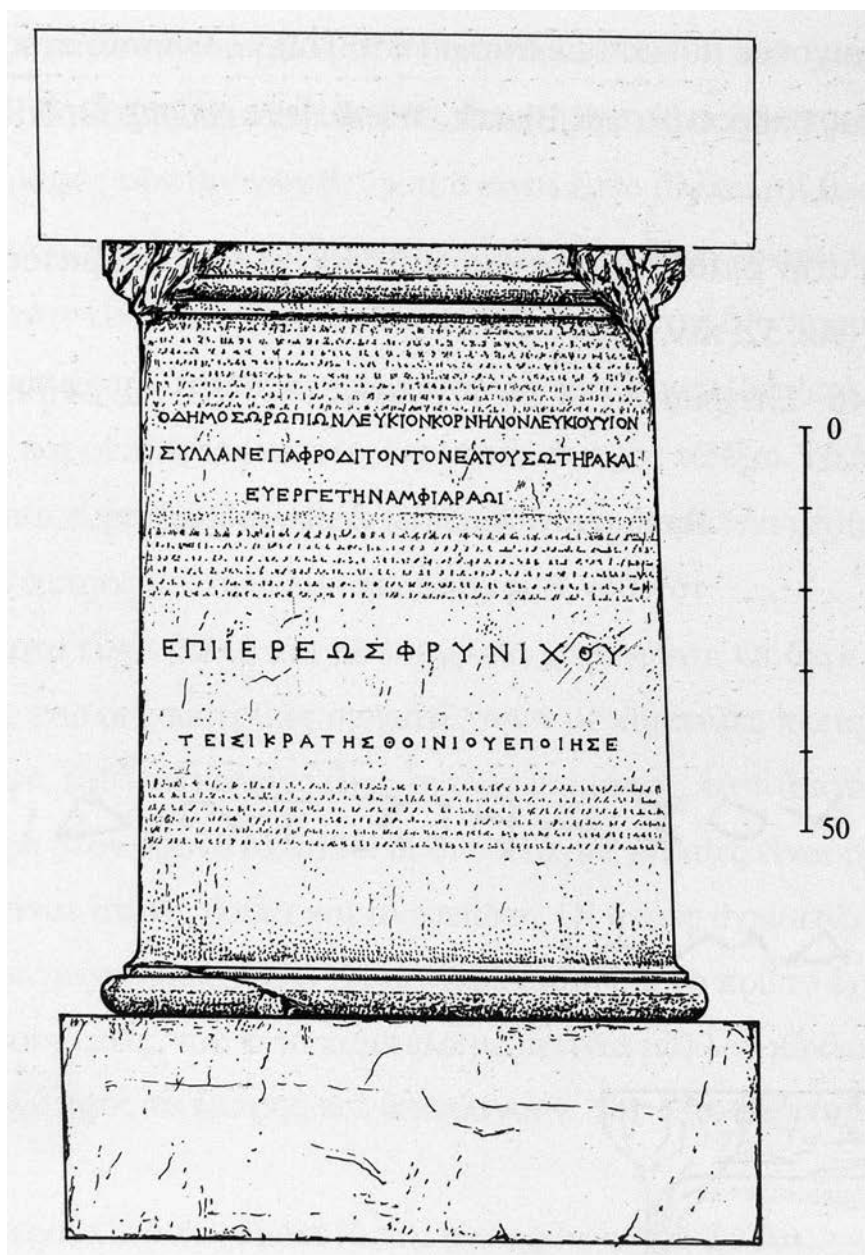


Figure 7.8 Reconstruction drawing of the statue base for a bronze equestrian sculpture originally dedicated to a Hellenistic monarch of c.300–275 bc and rededicated to Sulla c.86–81 bc. By kind permission of the Archaeological Society at Athens.

Conclusion

The meanings of pilgrimage are culturally and historically specific even within a continuous religious and ritual tradition as in the case study I have focused on. ‘Excavating pilgrimage’, in other words the painstaking sifting through the patchy archaeological evidence, allows us to distinguish phases of use and the changing priorities and emphases given to space, buildings and dedications. These material aspects of the sanctuary structured and moulded the experience of pilgrimage as people moved through the Amphiareion and viewed the votive dedications. The broader Hellenistic culture of reworking the classical canon, not only texts but also architecture and art, the specific emphasis on rural sanctuaries and on the process of viewing and commenting on votives in the Hellenistic cultural imaginary informed this interpretation of the site and dedications. This cultural hinterland which we find reflected in texts is vital for the analysis of the material, ‘excavated’ evidence. Through an analysis of the building activity in the Hellenistic sanctuary and through a series of close readings of votive material I have put forward evidence for the instantiation of the themes of the palimpsest and virtuality in the Hellenistic Amphiareion. While I have moved from the texts and broader culture to the specific materiality of the sanctuary I argue that the latter not only reflected these wider cultural trends but actively instilled them in pilgrims.

The experience of pilgrimage to the Hellenistic Amphiareion, then, differed from the experience of pilgrimage to the Classical and indeed the Roman sanctuary. While the palimpsest – the layering of cultural meanings – was a broader feature of Hellenistic culture, the interplay between virtual and real material worlds and presences was a key feature of ancient Greek healing and oracular pilgrimage throughout antiquity. The confluence of this constant feature of pilgrimage with its historically contingent prominence in the Hellenistic world modified and intensified the experience of pilgrimage to the Amphiareion and more broadly to healing and oracular shrines in the Hellenistic period.

Notes

- 1 The mythological genealogy and life story of Amphiaraos constitute him as a hero rather than a god; however, the cult practice at his sanctuary bears a strong resemblance to the worship of the healing god Asklepios. Amphiaraos is referred to as a god in the epigraphy of the sanctuary, for which see Petrakos 1997, and in Pausanias’ account of the sanctuary, where the Oropians are said to be the first to recognise him as a god, 1.34.1–5, *e.g.* 1.34.2.
- 2 For a brief history of the area see Cosmopoulos 2001, 14–18. On the site see Eliot 1976, 656. On the foundation of the sanctuary see Parker 1996, 146–149, and on its subsequent development see Petrakos 1968, 66–72. For a full list and commentary on the evidence for the cult see Schachter 1981, 19–26. For the epigraphic evidence of the cult see Petrakos 1997.
- 3 See Winter 2006, 207–218.
- 4 *The Greek Anthology* (1) References to the rural natural landscape or seascape: 6.23 (‘Hermes who dwells in this wave-beaten rock-cave, that gives good footing to fisher gulls’); 6.53 (temple in a field dedicated to Zephyr); 6.79 (an unsown precinct dedicated to Pan); 6.89 (‘Priapus, who delights in the sea-worn rocks of this island near the coast,

- and in its rugged peak'); 6.98 ('he owns but this little field on the barren hill-side'). (2) References to the material architecture of sanctuaries: 6.2 (this bow 'hangs here under the roof of Athene's temple'); 6.10 ('this horned altar' built for Pallas); 6.24 ('to the Syrian goddess in the porch of this temple'); 6.52 ('Rest, my long lance, thus against the high column and remain sacred to Panomphaean Zeus'); 6.112 ('These three heads of Maenalian stags with vast antlers hang in your portico Apollo'); 6.114 ('We hang in the porch, a gift of the king to Herakles, the skin and mighty horns fourteen palms long, of a wild bull'); 6.119 ('Cluster, full of the juice of Dionysos, you rest under the roof of Aphrodite's golden chamber'); 6.128 ('Rest in this holy house, bright shield, a gift from the wars to Artemis'); 6.132 (shields of the Bruttians, 'here they hang in the temple of the gods'). (3) References to specific sanctuaries: 6.6–8 and 6.49 (Apollo at Delphi), 6.52 (Panomphaean Zeus), 6.129 (Coryphasian Athene), 6.130 (Itonian Athene), 6.265 (Lacinian temple of Hera).
- 5 On Hellenistic developments in the depiction of landscape see Croisille 2010, 26–32 and Pollitt, 185–209.
 - 6 Marble votive relief with sacrificial scene, middle or late second century BC, Munich Glyptothek no. 206, and marble relief with peasant driving cow to market, late first century BC, Pollitt 1986, fig. 212. See Beyen 1952, 1–12; Pollitt 1986, 196–198; Schreiber 1894.
 - 7 On the myth of Amphiaraos see Gantz 1993, 506–519, and Pausanias, 1.34.2–5.
 - 8 For a summary of the archaeological remains of the sanctuary see Petrakos 1967, 1–13 at 1–8 and Travlos 1988, 301–318; for a more detailed description of individual buildings within the sanctuary see Petrakos 1968, 72–118.
 - 9 See Petrakos 1968, 99–107 (temple) and 124, no. 28 and pl. 45 (fragmentary cult statue).
 - 10 On the altar and theatral area see Petrakos 1968, 96–99.
 - 11 On the stoa see Petrakos 1968, 77–84; 1997, no. 340. It dates to c.360 BC, 110 m long, inner Ionic colonnade and outer Doric colonnade. See Coulton 1976, 26; 1968, 147–183.
 - 12 On the theatre in the sanctuary of Amphiaraos see Sear 2006, 45, 402–403, and Fiechter 1930. On general developments in the architecture of theatres in the Hellenistic period see Winter 2006, 96–110.
 - 13 *IG* 7.414 and 4254 (Dittenberger 1892).
 - 14 Fiechter 1930, 27; Petrakos 1997, no. 430 (see *IG* 7 p.745), 435 (= *IG* 7.423) and 439a–e (see *IG* 7 p.745).
 - 15 Sear 2006, 403: height of *proscenium* 2.46 m and upper storey of scene building 3.69 m.
 - 16 On *skenographia* see Pollitt 1974, 236–247.
 - 17 Petrakos 1997, no. 439 (see *IG* 7 p.745).
 - 18 See *Ibid.*, no. 294 (= *IG* 7.412) and Petrakos 1968, 106–107, and 107 note 1. The inscription is in poor condition and the exact nature of the building activity on the temple is unclear. For a sculptural dedication set up by the same priest Eubiotos see Petrakos 1997, no. 432.
 - 19 On Hellenistic architecture in sanctuaries see Pollitt 1986, 230–249; Winter 2006, 5–49. On the sanctuary at Samothrace see Wescoat in this volume.
 - 20 On the Aphrodite of Knidos see Haynes 2013, 71–95; Stewart 1996, 205–230; 2014, 177–180.
 - 21 On the temple of Apollo at Didyma see Tuchelt 1992.
 - 22 On Herodas' fourth *Mimiamb* see Gelzer 1985, 96–115; Goldhill 1994, 197–223; 216–223; Skinner 2001, 201–221; Zanker 2006, 357–377.
 - 23 B. Bing 2009, especially 116–146; Bing and Bruss 2007; Squire 2010, 589–634.
 - 24 *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book* (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309), 'Dedications' 36–39 and 'Cures' 95–101; Austin and Bastianini 2002, 58–63 and 120–127. See Acosta-Hughes *et al.* 2004; Di Nino 2010; Gutzwiller 2005.
 - 25 *Greek Anthology*, 6.275, 9.332, 9.605 and possibly also 6.353, 6.354 and 9.604. See Gutzwiller 1998, 74–84, especially 82–84; Skinner 1991, 20–47; Tueller 2008, 166–177.

- 26 For an interpretation of a selection of Classical votive reliefs from the Amphiareion see Petsalis-Diomidis 2006, 205–229; 207–212.
- 27 For a comparative analysis of the second-century AD Pergamene Asklepieion see Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 238–275.
- 28 Inventories of unknown purpose: Petrakos 1997, no. 310–311 (335–322 BC); no. 319 (fourth century BC); no. 321 (second half of the third century BC); no. 323 (third century BC); no. 325 (= *IG* 7.3498) (end of third century BC); no. 327 (second to first century BC).
- 29 On the purposes of temple inventories see Higbie 2003, 260–262; Linders 1988, 37–47; Scott 2011, 239–252. On temple inventories from other sanctuaries see Aleshire 1989; Dignas 2002, 235–244; Hamilton 2000; Harris 1995; Linders 1972. See Petsalis-Diomidis forthcoming 2017.
- 30 Inventories related to the melting down of dedications: no. 324 (end of third century BC), no. 326 (mid second century BC).
- 31 Petrakos 1997, no. 324 (= *IG* 7.303). British Museum no. 1816,0610.378. On the dating of the archonship of Straton see Etienne and Knoepfler 1976, 315.
- 32 The stele has an interesting collecting history: it first entered the collection of the *Compte de Choiseul-Gouffier*, French ambassador to Constantinople; the ship that was transporting it to France was captured by Lord Nelson, and the antiquities were taken to Malta; it was then acquired by Lord Elgin and it entered the British museum collection together with the more famous ‘Elgin marbles’ in 1816. See Petrakos 1997, 231.
- 33 Petrakos 1997, no. 324 lines 39–44.
- 34 *Ibid.*, no. 324 lines 41–48. Compare reference to the stone of the stele from nearby Lartos in the *Lindian Chronicle*: see Higbie 2003, lines 5–6 and Platt 2011, 165.
- 35 On melting down of dedications see Linders 1989–1990, 281–285.
- 36 Compare the way that at the Asklepieion at Corinth cheap terracotta anatomical votives were buried in deposits within the sanctuary and not thrown out. This seems to have taken place when buildings which housed them were demolished and new monumental buildings were constructed c.400 BC. See Roebuck 1951, 113–119.
- 37 Petrakos 1997, no. 276 lines 7–8 (402–387 BC); no. 277 lines 39–43 (= *IG* 7.235) (387–377 BC).
- 38 *Ibid.*, no. 427 (= *IG* 7.297).
- 39 Ma 2013, 139–142, with Plan 3.
- 40 Boston Museum of Fine Arts no. 01.8207 (Arsinoe III) and no. 01.8208 (Ptolemy IV), bought in Alexandria 1901. See Smith 1988, 91–92, catalogue nos. 48–49.
- 41 Ma 2013, 45–63 on the politics of the accusative in honorific monuments.
- 42 For the reference to the tragedy see Snell 1971, 283. For evidence for the foundation of the cult of Homer see Aelian, 13.22 and Webster 1964, 144–145; On the Archelaos relief (British Museum no. 1819,0812.1) see Newby 2007, 156–178.
- 43 Petrakos 1997, no. 325 lines 59–60 (= *IG* 7.3498). It is not clear whether the following gold pieces are part of his dedication (lines 60–62): fragments of a *phiale*, leaves of a wreath, a golden olive branch, hinged lids and small plate, all together weighing 56.2 grams.
- 44 *Ibid.*, no. 129 (= *IG* 7.299) (the Athenian Rodon, son of Rodokleus) and no. 175 (= *IG* 7.298) (Phormion son of Nymphaios of Byzantion, honoured exceptionally with presiding over the games, priority in the assembly and *boule*).
- 45 *Ibid.*, no. 175 lines 24–25.
- 46 *Ibid.*, nos. 424 and 425 (= *IG* 7.374 and 375).
- 47 See *Ibid.*, no. 71 (= *IG* 7.247) and no. 72 (= *IG* 7.300). See Ma 2013, 163; 188–189 and 207.
- 48 Other examples from the Amphiareion include Petrakos 1997, no. 415 (= *IG* 7.431); no. 418–419 (= *IG* 7.249, 250); no. 424–425 (= *IG* 7.374, 375), and no. 428 (= *IG* 7.434).
- 49 Contrast Ma’s strict division of honorific dedications and votive dedications in this sanctuary in his analysis, Ma 2013, 122.
- 50 Archinos relief, National Archaeological Museum no. 3369; Petrakos 1997, no. 344. See Platt 2011, 44–47, and Petsalis-Diomidis 2006, 209–210.

- 51 Decrees: Petrakos no. 79 (= *IG* 7.376) and no. 80 (= *IG* 7.377) (both dated to the archonship of Philon I, c.220 BC); no. 216 (= *IG* 7.378) and no. 217 (= *IG* 7.379) (both after c.150 BC).
- 52 Petrakos no. 442 (= *IG* 7.264) (rededication to Sulla by demos of Oropos); also no. 385 (= *IG* 7.266, 267) (priest and artist); (proxeny decrees) no. 53 (= *IG* 7.263) (c.230 BC); no. 56 (= *IG* 7.265); 57 (c.239–229 BC).
- 53 Löhr 1993, 183–212; Ma 2013, 112; 139–142 and 221–222; Shear 2007, 221–246.

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8 Roman healing pilgrimage north of the Alps

Martin Grünewald

This chapter discusses pilgrimage in the Gallic and Germanic provinces of the Roman Empire.¹ Pilgrimage is here understood as a journey made with the purpose of reaching a sacred destination.² The phenomenon of Roman pilgrimage over long distances in the region north of the Alps has been discussed only marginally in related scholarly debate.³ Nevertheless, religiously motivated travel played a significant role in the northwestern provinces. It remains difficult to ascertain whether these journeys were undertaken for religious reasons or whether the travellers had economic, political or social motives. If the journey is religiously motivated, what journey length can be defined as a pilgrimage? Anthropological models assume that leaving the everyday environment is sufficient for the definition. However, the everyday environment of any given individual can differ greatly: a visit to a foreign sanctuary by a travelling merchant must therefore be judged differently in terms of pilgrimage from the visit of a farmer who is far from home. Hence, visiting locals cannot be regarded as pilgrims.⁴ It is hard to differentiate between local visitors to sanctuaries and ‘real’ pilgrims: firstly, the sanctuaries are usually located in settlements, and secondly, the visitor’s origin and/or starting point in the majority of cases cannot be determined. Sacred sites that are isolated from settlements are an exception, because potential visitors would have to undertake a journey of a certain distance to get there.⁵

Building structures of pilgrimage sanctuaries

The typical building structures of pilgrimage sanctuaries in the Roman North have been emphasized by Philip Kiernan in a recently published paper. Besides the temples themselves, pilgrimage centres are often characterized by the presence of theatres, baths, open spaces and hostels.⁶ For example, in Sanxay (France), there is a direct axial relationship between the baths and the spring sanctuary.⁷ The theatregoers had a perfect view of the temple. In the area between the baths and the theatre lie the hostels of the pilgrims.

Together with baths and temples, theatres constitute the monumental centre of many large settlements in Gaul and Germania Superior.⁸ Many of the Gallic temple-and-theatre ensembles can be interpreted as religious and political centres of the *civitates* and their subdivisions, the so-called *pagi*. But theatres have

also been found situated next to rural sanctuaries, as in Möhn, Heckenmünster and Gerolstein-Pelm (all in Germany).⁹ The sacral function of ancient theatres has been known for long time,¹⁰ a function that is underlined by the axial alignment of temples and theatres as in Avenches and Augst (both in Switzerland).¹¹ The cultic character of theatres is further suggested by inscriptions like those at the *frons scenae* of the Wederath (Germany) theatre referring to the local god Creto, the genius of the *pagus* and the imperial house – *In honor(em) dom(us) d(ivinae)*.¹² Where the number of spectators exceeds that of residents, we can assume the participation of festival-goers from other settlements. This is attested for the theatres of Grand (France), with 17,000 seats, and Bernkastel-Stadt (Germany), which had room for at least 3,000 spectators.¹³ Compared with these huge capacities, the settlements themselves were relatively small. Hostels associated with the sanctuaries were used by visitors who could not travel back on the same day and needed to stay overnight.¹⁴ These hostels may therefore indicate the presence of pilgrims. They are often characterized by a series of small rooms arranged around a courtyard.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the interpretation of hostels in sanctuaries that are located far away from settlements is also difficult. It is questionable whether all overnight guests were actually pilgrims who wished to visit the sanctuary. One example is the isolated temple of Jupiter Poeninus and its associated hostel (and stable) located on the Great St Bernard alpine pass (Switzerland), which served as a major traffic route between Italy and the northern provinces.¹⁶ The site was visited during journeys undertaken predominantly for other reasons.¹⁷ A close spatial relationship between hostels and sanctuaries, especially spring sanctuaries, is also known from other sites such as Aachen, Hochscheid (both Germany), Sceaux-du-Gâtinais and Sanxay (both France).¹⁸ Ascetic or less wealthy visitors may have slept in tents set up in the open spaces of these sites. Especially during the temporary cultic festivals, these were probably numerous. These spaces also served as meeting places, especially in front of temples and theatres. Baths, especially those with huge basins, featured importantly in several healing cults.¹⁹

Pilgrimages to healing and spring cults

Journeys to spring sanctuaries with associated healing thermal springs are well attested throughout antiquity.²⁰ In the Gallic and Germanic provinces, well-known ground plans, inscriptions and finds show that journeys were made to these spring sanctuaries at least partly for religiously motivated reasons. Like trees, caves and rivers, springs – in particular, the sources of important rivers, as well as strong or warm springs (Seneca, *Epist.* 41.3) – were considered sacred (Servius, *Aen.* 7.84). In addition to their numinous properties, particularly the water gushing from the depths of the earth, this sacralization meant that the spring waters were kept pure, which ultimately benefited all users.²¹ This chapter will analyze sanctuaries located at water sources in light of the concept of pilgrimage as a case study among the various sanctuaries

characterized by their natural surroundings.²² In most cases, archaeologists distinguish between thermal and mineral healing springs or spas, rather than mineral and non-mineral as do balneologists.²³ Among the various spas, it is thermal springs upon which this chapter will focus as a pilgrimage destination. However, as cold springs without mineral qualities were also sought out by pilgrims for personal healing, it is difficult to make a distinction between spas and other springs, particularly in view of the fact that the physical cleanliness of normal spring water was perceived as being both pure and possessing healing properties. It is also difficult to ascertain whether travellers differentiated between journeys undertaken with the aim of personal or spiritual healing or a secular stay at a thermal bath. The close spatial relationship between thermal baths and larger sanctuaries indicates religious motives. Such a strong association is apparent, for example, in the funerary inscription for Blandina Martiola, in which her husband bemoans that they will never again bathe together at the Apollo baths.²⁴ The presence of votive altars is often the only tangible evidence of certain individuals expressing their wishes, and the dedication of these altars was clearly religiously motivated. The interconnection between physical and spiritual healing and religious cult practice is clearly expressed in dedicatory inscriptions which were erected in the frame of making vows. The majority of these inscriptions were dedicated during convalescence, or to give thanks after complete recovery.²⁵

Venerated gods

Certain gods – such as Apollo and Sirona, Borvo and Damona, Nerio, Sequana, Sul, Coventina, Salus and various nymphs – were associated with these spring sanctuaries. Among these deities, Apollo, with his many local epithets such as Moritasgus (Alesia), Vindonnus (Essarois), Belenus (Sainte Sabine, all in France) and especially Grannus, played a particularly important role.²⁶

Regional differences can be identified in the worship of these gods. Damona can be found in central and eastern Gaul, Borvo/Bormona is worshipped in the southeast, Stanna in the southwest and in the centre of Gaul, and Salus in Spain, whereas Apollo Grannus and Sirona were mainly worshipped in the Germanic provinces, eastern Gaul and Raetia.²⁷ By contrast, dedications to the Graeco-Roman god of healing, Asclepius, are hardly known from this region and mostly originate from non-natives such as the physician Zosimus from Ostia, a governor from Cilicia, or an individual who left a dedication in the Greek script. Rather than making pilgrimages from the Mediterranean region to Gallic and Germanic sanctuaries, these individuals were probably in the region for some other reason. Rather than Asclepius or his local equivalents, the worship of local healing gods or syncretistic forms of Apollo was preferred.²⁸ At the sources of larger rivers, the corresponding water gods were worshipped: for example, Matrona (Marne), Icauni (Yonne) and, especially, Sequana at the sources of the River Seine.²⁹ Other gods – such as Isis,³⁰ Lenus Mars and Ancamna (Treves), Vercana and Meduna

(Bad Bertrich), Boudina and Alauna (Pantenburg, all in Germany),³¹ Comedovae (Aix-les-Bains),³² Ianuaria (Beire-le-Châtel)³³ and Divona (Bordeaux),³⁴ as well as the eponymous site in Divonne-les-Bains (all in France)³⁵ – are also sometimes connected with springs.

Long-distance pilgrimage or limited mobility?

The question whether pilgrims came from the immediate surroundings or travelled over long distances has been vigorously discussed for many years. According to Andreas Kakoschke, only spatially limited movement was undertaken throughout the Germanic provinces to reach the spas located in the region,³⁶ whereas Lothar Wierschowski only discusses economic motives for travelling within Gaul.³⁷ According to Bourgeois, the curative sanctuaries located there would generally have played an important role for the local population.³⁸ In the following, it will be made clear that a larger catchment area can be assumed for sanctuaries with spas, some of which extended well over the border of individual *civitates*.³⁹ The phenomenon of a longer pilgrimage also existed in pagan antiquity in the region north of the Alps.

Tabula Peutingeriana

Spas – often connected with larger temple complexes – are depicted in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* in very large scale.⁴⁰ The Tabula is a medieval copy of a road map of the entire Roman Empire around AD 300, itself based on older precursors (Figure 8.1). Spas are rendered on it as rectangular buildings, often with a characteristic blue inner courtyard. These symbols are larger than those denoting *coloniae* or legionary camps.⁴¹ This observation alone underlines how important it was for individuals using this map to visit spas during longer journeys. The map depicts a total of 52 such symbols, with diverse variations, throughout the entire empire, and it is interesting to note that 28 of these bear a name including the word ‘Aquae’, for example Aquae Segestae or Aquae Calidae.⁴² Of these sites, spring sanctuaries are unequivocally attested at, for example, Sceaux-du-Gâtinais, Bourbon-Lancy, Vichy and Grand.⁴³ The majority of these sites are still regarded as important thermal baths, for example Bagnères-de-Bigorre, Bourbon-Lancy, Saint-Honoré-les-Bains, Valkenburg and Vichy. In addition to the symbol used on the Peutinger map, archaeological remains, for example at Andesina, are decisive when identifying these sites as spas (Figure 8.1). Grand is dominated by the central temple area with its healing springs. The theatre built here, later extended to an amphitheatre, had enough space to hold 17,000 people, a number that far exceeded the total population of the ancient settlement at the time. It is safe to assume therefore that the theatre served as a meeting place for pilgrims, and not only for those coming from the immediate surroundings. The significance of the sanctuary at Grand is also indicated by a visit made by Constantine in the year AD 310.⁴⁴



Figure 8.1 The Peutinger map with a section from Segment II and III after Miller 1888. At the upper edge of the map, the legionary camp at Bonn as well as the *coloniae* such as Xanten and Cologne (at the same time the provincial capital) are represented with the symbol of two adjacent houses. By contrast, the spas are symbolized in a larger scale. In this image section from left to right: Aquis Bormonis, Aquis Nisincii, Aquis Segeste, Andesina, Aquis Sestis.

Epigraphic evidence

In addition to the sites shown on the Peutinger map, further important sanctuaries are associated with thermal baths in the region north of the Alps. Long-distance travel, and especially religiously motivated journeys, are indicated by dedication inscriptions by individuals from more distant places of origin (Figure 8.2).

Of course the dedication inscriptions in question are characterized by the usual formalized wording, and therefore include neither the traveller's place of origin as the journey's starting point nor the location where the inscribed altar was set or found as the destination. It is also possible that dedications were made by individuals living at the spas in question, despite an origin in the faraway location they still mention on the stone. However, in view of the large number of dedications made by foreign visitors at these sites, this may explain individual cases, but not the phenomenon in general. Furthermore, it is also possible that these individuals made only short stops at the spring sanctuaries. This explanation becomes less likely in cases where the sites are situated at a greater distance from economic

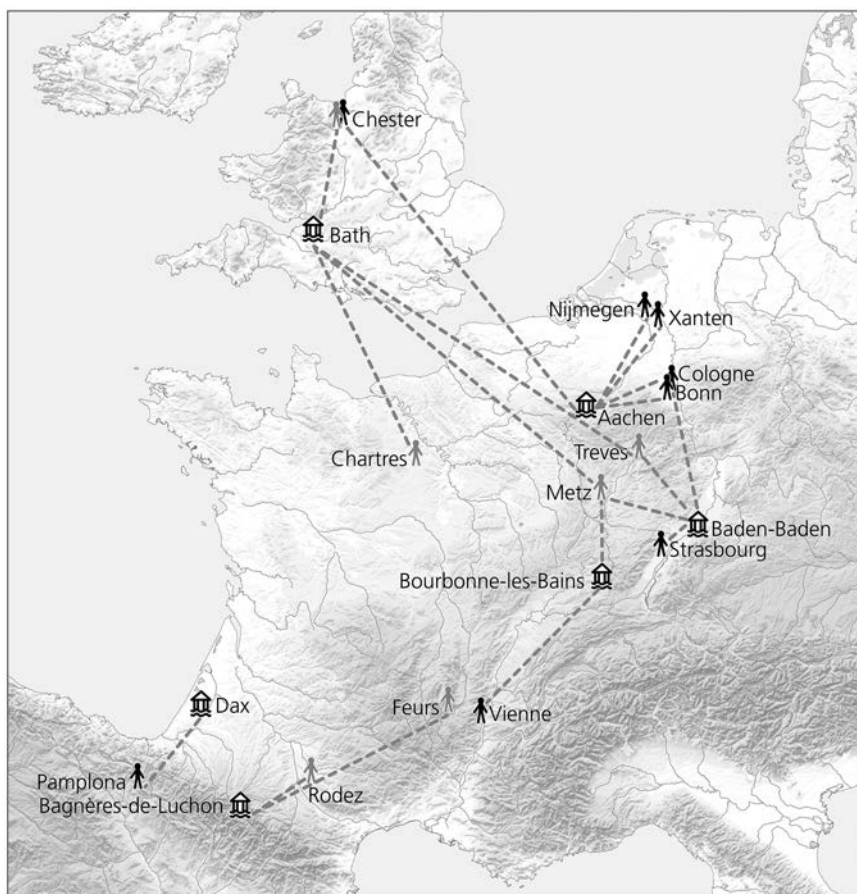


Figure 8.2 Examples of journeys to places with (healing) springs and sanctuaries on the basis of selected inscriptions. The place of origin (black stickmen) and the region of origin (grey stickmen) of the dedicators have been assumed as the potential starting point of the journey, and the find spot of the inscription as the destination. Graphic by Vera Kassühlke, RGZM.

centres and the trans-regional road network than sanctuaries that stood along the roadside.⁴⁵ Consequently, I suggest that these sanctuaries and thermal baths represent independent (intermediate) destinations that were sought out in the course of longer journeys. The exact route of these journeys cannot be determined on the basis of the inscriptions under consideration. Therefore only the linear distance between the individual sites is shown in the map (Figure 8.2). It can be assumed that the well-developed Roman road network was used.

The specific interrelationship between sanctuaries located at thermal springs and military camps in the Rhine provinces has already been emphasized by

Nuber, and will be illustrated in the following.⁴⁶ As already mentioned above, it is remarkable that the larger thermal baths of the legions stationed in the Rhine provinces, such as the site at Aachen (Figure 8.1), are missing from the Peutinger map.⁴⁷ This observation probably constitutes another indication for the primary military circle of users than in the case of civil spas in Gaul. Both well-known and newly published inscriptions repeatedly attest to the fact that the dedicators came from distant places of origin. The healing spas of Germania Superior, particularly *Aquae Mattiacorum*/Wiesbaden near Mainz (Germany) and *Aquae Helveticae*/Baden 8.8 km from Windisch (Switzerland), are spatially related to legionary camps in those areas.⁴⁸ In Wiesbaden, Porcia Rufiniana, the daughter of the commander of the Twenty-second Legion, stationed in Mainz, dedicated a sculpture to thank the goddess Diana Mattiaca.⁴⁹ In the case of the centurion L. Marinius Marinianus, who dedicated a stone to Apollo Toutiorix, it is assumed that, rather than an act carried out after an individual pilgrimage from the legionary camp in Léon (Spain), this dedication attests the presence of a delegation from the Seventh Legion at the empire's border in the vicinity of Wiesbaden during the Germanic War in AD 232.⁵⁰ The hot Mattiacian springs are known from a description given by Pliny (*HN*. 31,17), while Baden was praised by Tacitus (1, 67) as much visited for its picturesque surroundings and the benefits conferred by its healing springs.

On the basis of further textual sources, a relationship with military installations can also be established for thermal springs even further away. Inscriptions in *Aquae*/Baden-Baden (Germany) contain the names of legionaries who came from the 50 km distant Strasbourg (France).⁵¹ In addition, non-local civilians are also attested in Baden-Baden: a *Mediomatrus* and a *Trevirus*, whose *civitas* was over 100 km away, could have been here for health reasons.⁵² Another remarkable source is the inscription of the Cologne-born L. Aemilius Crescens, who served as a legionary in the Fourteenth Legion. This man apparently died while undergoing a cure in Baden-Baden, and it can be assumed on the basis of a funerary inscription that his brothers travelled to the funeral.⁵³ In Aachen, a sacred precinct with a temple building located between two large spas, as well as pilgrim hostels, are archaeologically attested for the Roman period (Figure 8.3).⁵⁴ Indications for a theatre have been found but their investigation still awaits completion.⁵⁵ The guests and pilgrims who visited Aachen came not only from the nearby legionary camps at Bonn and Cologne, but also from Xanten (located at a distance of over 100 km), from Nijmegen (over 130 km)⁵⁶ and, according to a recently published inscription, also from Chester in Great Britain (over 770 km). The dedication or rather building inscription of *Iulia Tiberina* from Chester for the temple of *Mater Deum* and *Isis* is particularly remarkable, as it hints that she preferred the Aachen thermal springs to the Britannic spas at *Aquae Sulis*. Perhaps this preference resulted from a particular condition that could only be cured in Aachen, or alternatively from familiarity with the area. The latter possibility is supported by the career of her husband, a centurion in the Twentieth Legion who had formerly served in the Rhineland.⁵⁷ Other springs are also known in the area of the Aachen spring sanctuaries associated with the legions, such as Aachen-Burtscheid and

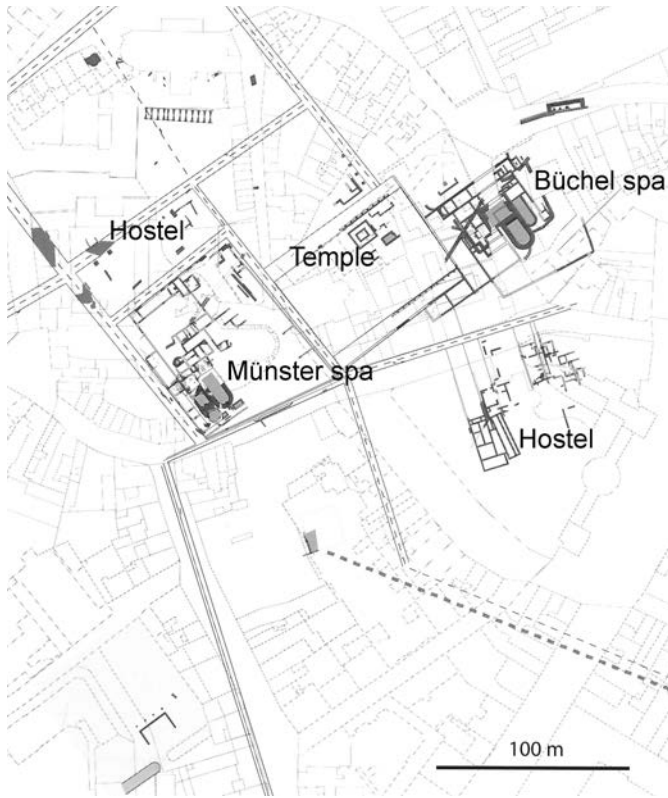


Figure 8.3 Spa and cult centre of Aachen during the Roman period. After Schaub 2013a, 419 fig. 4.

Heilstein near Wollseifen (all in Germany). At the latter sanctuary the Batav Madgarisianus⁵⁸ made a dedication, and it should be emphasized that the main town of his *civitas*, namely *Ulpia Noviomagus Batavorum*/Nijmegen, is over 150 km from this sanctuary. In Aachen-Burtscheid, the camp prefect of the Ninth Legion from Nijmegen – i.e. from roughly the same distance from the spring sanctuary as in the previous example – dedicated an altar to Apollo.⁵⁹ In the thermal baths at Aachen, another military component is attested, via brick stamps of the Xanten legions and also via an assumed construction camp.⁶⁰

Furthermore, a relationship between military garrisons and thermal baths can be assumed for the neighbouring provinces. Several military officers of the Second and Sixth Legions, stationed in Britannia, chose to fulfil their vows by making dedications in Bath. In addition, tombstones of soldiers from the Twentieth Legion were found in *Aquae Sulis*.⁶¹ The former group probably made a successful journey to Bath specifically for the purpose of being healed. The spring sanctuary at

Bath is assumed to have played a more central role in Britannia than comparable thermal baths in Gaul and Italy. This is because the springs in Bath were the only ones in the whole of Britannia that reached a temperature of over 40 degrees.⁶² Solinus mentions sacred and steaming springs in Gaul⁶³ as well as hot springs in Britannia that were luxuriously equipped, and even though he does not provide any more specific information, he is surely referring to the springs at Bath.⁶⁴ Non-local pilgrims from outside Britannia are attested at Bath, such as the Trevir Peregrinus, who left dedications to Leucetius and Nemetona; the Mediomatrici Rusonia Aventina, a stonemason from the region of Carnutes in Gaul; and a rider of Spanish origin who served in the *Ala Vettonum*, stationed in Britannia at that time.⁶⁵ It is remarkable that next to York, inscriptions at Bath attest the highest number of Gauls in the whole of Britannia.⁶⁶ This fact can be explained by the great significance of long-distance journeys to sites of healing cults with curative thermal springs. A similar place of worship in Britannia, the well of Coventina in Carrawburgh, is assumed on the basis of inscriptions to have played a central function for several companies of troops stationed at Hadrian's Wall.⁶⁷

It goes without saying that civilians too travelled to spring sanctuaries. In Bourbonne-les-Bains (France), a site shown by the coins found there to have been visited by soldiers from an early stage, Sextilia Sexti f. travelled from the Mediomatrici region, probably as guest at a spa, and dedicated a votive stone to Borvo and Damona.⁶⁸ Rufinus, from the 300 km distant Vienne (France), probably had similar reasons for staying in Bourbonne.⁶⁹ A Roman citizen of the Otacilii family from the vicinity of Avenches/Aventicum dedicated an altar to Apollo in Yverdon-les-Bains⁷⁰ (both in Switzerland), and can therefore be regarded as a pilgrim. A prominent dedicator is Annia Faustina in the sanctuary of the nymphs in Griselliae in Gréoux-les-Bains (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, France). She is the cousin of the emperor Marcus Aurelius and wife of the consul, T. Vitrasius Pollio. Faustina and Pollio also made dedications to the nymphs in Léon (Spain).⁷¹ However, it remains unknown whether they visited the still well-known sulphuric thermal baths en route in connection with a differently motivated journey or whether Gréoux was the specific destination of a pilgrimage. By contrast, it seems that the site of Bagnères-de-Luchon can be described as a trans-regional spa and pilgrimage destination: dedications by two women, the first from the Ruteni, Manutia (Massif Central, southern Gaul, *civitas* with the main town of Segodunum/Rodez), and the second, Cassia Touta, from the Segusiaveri (main town Segusiavorum/Feurs, France), to the nymphs attest to visits by visitors from further afield whose hometowns were respectively 270 and 550 km from the site.⁷² The spring sanctuary of Apollo Moritasgus of Alise 'La Croix Saint-Charles' (France), located about 50 km from Autun, was visited by the honourable Aedius Tib. Claudius Professus Niger, probably also in the context of a pilgrimage or cure.⁷³ Aemilius Placidus, who came from the almost 150 km distant Pamplona (Spain), was buried in Aquae Tarbellicae/Dax (France). It is possible that he was there for an unfortunately unsuccessful cure.⁷⁴ At the spa located at Aquae Neri/Néris-les-Bains (Allier/France), the deity Nerio was one of the gods worshipped. Porticoes, *tabernae* and *diribitoria* around the thermal baths were dedicated in her

name.⁷⁵ A tombstone belonging to a *miles* serving in the Fourteenth Legion at this site, as well as brick stamps of the *Leg(io) VIII Aug(usta)*,⁷⁶ attest to the presence of military elements in Gaul, as often with the spas of the Germanic provinces.

As for the altars erected by people undertaking the longest journeys, of more than 180 km, between their place of origin and their preferred spring sanctuary, in five of the seven examples studied the dedicators are female⁷⁷ – this is, however, admittedly a relatively small data basis. The high proportion of women is particularly surprising as female dedicators are generally under-represented. By contrast, many dedications at roadside sanctuaries were made by men travelling for professional reasons. This observation gives an interesting indication of gender differences relating to pilgrimage, which may also be comparable to post-antique behaviour patterns. Among a variety of explanations for this, only a few can be briefly speculated upon at this point. For example, it is possible that the attested female individuals were passively left at these places of spiritual and physical healing while their husbands dealt with business affairs. On the other hand, women may also have actively travelled to a votive site, either independently or in company with other travellers among whom these women in particular were intent on honouring a vow to the (healing) deity.

Different forms of worship of the ancient gods are sometimes gender-specific (cf. Friese, this volume). For example, the Thesmophoria, as well as certain ceremonies in honour of the Bona Dea, were carried out specifically excluding men.⁷⁸

Pilgrimage souvenirs from spring sanctuaries

Souvenirs were acquired both at spas and at spring sanctuaries. A good example of such souvenirs are glass bottles of the type Isings 103,⁷⁹ bearing engraved representations of the famous spa towns of Puteoli and Baiae with their temples and thermal baths (Figure 8.4).⁸⁰ Their wide distribution, extending far beyond Italy and as far as the Iberian peninsula,⁸¹ North Africa, Cologne and York, is evidence of the particular appeal of these sites.⁸² From the spa town of Baden (Switzerland), knives made by Gemellianus were popular (traded?) souvenirs, as the term *Aquis He(lveticis) Gemellianus F(ecit)* reveals. Nevertheless, not all knife sheaths signed in this way were manufactured here, as demonstrated by a casting mould found in Pocking (Germany).⁸³

Another pilgrimage souvenir, to date the only known example of its kind, is decorated with various scenes of the sanctuary of a nymph associated with a spring. The object in question is a *patera* (Figure 8.5) found at a considerable distance from the sanctuary in Castro-Urdiales (Otañes, Spain), near Santander, which originates from the spring sanctuary Umeri (presumably in the Pyrenees), as demonstrated by the lettering *Salus Umeritana*. In addition to the nymph herself, the individual scenes show a ritual act performed at an altar by an old man with a walking stick, a young man fetching water from the spring, an old man who is seated and is being presented with the healing spring water, a man filling a barrel on a cart with spring water from an amphora, and the votive offering of liquid on an altar, presumably by the same old man as depicted in the other scenes. As



Figure 8.4 Distribution of the glass bottles of the type Isings 103 from *Puteoli* (open circles) and *Baiae* (open squares) with representations of both spa towns (the place of origin is black; the open diamonds symbolize vessels, the origin of which cannot be specified as either *Puteoli* or *Baiae*). Graphic by Vera Kassühlke, RGZM. Above left the exemplary representation of the decoration including the temple. After Bejarano Osorio 2005, 517 fig. 5a.

this figure no longer needs to use his walking stick for support, it can be assumed that his affliction was healed by the spring waters.⁸⁴ The religious act follows the successful healing process. The find spot of this object on the coast probably lies a considerable distance from the spring sanctuary, which is presumed to be in the Pyrenees but cannot be located with any certainty. Therefore it can be assumed that the *patera* was taken as a memento.



Figure 8.5 Spa souvenir from the cult activities that took place at the thermal spring *Salus Umeritana* in northern Spain. The silver *patera* (private collection, diameter 21.5 cm) was found at Castro-Urdiales (Otañes, Santander, Spain). After Peréx Agorreta 1997.

Perspectives

Pilgrims left not only inscriptions in sanctuaries, but also a wide spectrum of diverse objects and remains. A comprehensive overview of the material presented in individual studies is still outstanding. The need of the pilgrims visiting these sites for physical healing is expressed by their multiple offerings of votives related to the human body. These votives often include representations of the pilgrims themselves,⁸⁵ but mainly consist of models in the shape of body parts such as legs, pelvis, *phalli* and *vulvae*, internal organs, hands, breasts and eyes.⁸⁶ Great quantities of these votive offerings were found (391 stone,

156 metal and 278 wooden objects) in the area of the sanctuary dedicated to Sequana that was built near the source of the Seine (Côte d'Or/France),⁸⁷ as well as almost 3,500 examples in Chamalière (Puy-de-Dôme/France).⁸⁸ Coins were also left as offerings, as in Bourbonne-les-Bains, where over 4,500 coins were thrown into the spring alone during the two decades around the time of Christ's birth.⁸⁹ Fibulae and whole garments were also offered.⁹⁰ In the vicinity of curative sanctuaries, cultic metal depots with vessels, votive plates or figures of gods have been found, for example in Vichy/Aquis Calidis, where 80 votive plates were found that could very well have been left intentionally by pilgrims. Lamps, curse tablets, jewellery, miniature votives such as weapons, but also animals and fruit may also represent offerings made by pilgrims.⁹¹ As a rule, however, until now these offerings only give a marginal indication of the origin of the dedicator or of the length of journey made.⁹²

Spring sanctuaries connected with non-natives known from there thus serve as examples of pilgrimage destinations. In addition, numerous sanctuaries can be named that were located outside antique settlements and were therefore presumably the destination of pilgrims.⁹³ Such an example is the complex of Heckenmünster, which is situated 26 km from Treves and would have meant a day's journey from there. It is therefore evident that visitors to this sanctuary were undertaking a pilgrimage, unless it is to be assumed that the sanctuary also served travellers as a way station along the road between Treves and Andernach (both in Germany), which runs at a distance of several kilometres from the sanctuary in question. A comparison between pilgrimage sites where the imperial cult was celebrated and sites of healing discussed in this chapter is in preparation.

Conclusion

Even though it is difficult to distinguish religious incentives to travel from economic, political and social reasons, travelling for sacred reasons was of essential importance. An analysis of significant sanctuaries, inscriptions and votives in the Germanic and Gallic provinces can provide indications for the religious motives. Visits to Roman healing spas have here been addressed as a case study of religiously motivated travel in the area north of the Alps during the Roman period. A rich material legacy and specific buildings hint at numerous visitors to these sanctuaries. The well-established opinion that spa visitors and pilgrims from the Germanic provinces travelled only to Roman spas that were located in the immediate vicinity can be relativized in this context. On the contrary, newly published inscriptions from both Germany and France also attest to journeys that were made over a distance of several hundred kilometres. According to the dedications it seems that especially women, who are otherwise under-represented in the overall epigraphic evidence, undertook long pilgrimages to centres of healing cults. The supraregional appeal of specific spas and healing cults is further underlined by the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. The large icons indicating healing spas on this Roman road map clearly indicate importance to long-distance

travellers. Dedications by non-local individuals in the relevant spring sanctuaries are therefore considered – contrary to previously cautious interpretations in this direction – as stronger evidence of pilgrimage.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank the organizers of the conference for their support (as well as the reviewer), furthermore Catherine Jones and Lucy Seton-Watson for the translation. The study on ‘The Origins of Pilgrimage in the Northwest of the Roman Empire’ is a contribution of the Department of Roman Studies of the Roman-Germanic Central Museum in Mainz to the project ‘For the Sake of Salvation and a Happy Life: Studies of Byzantine Pilgrimage and Its Origins’, financed by the Leibniz Association. The project is undertaken as part of the research programme Leibniz ScienceCampus Mainz: Byzantium between Orient and Occident.
- 2 For the various forms of pilgrimage, see Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 12–30.
- 3 Long-distance journeys undertaken because of religious motives or reasons of health are not addressed by Kakoschke 2002, 500, 506–508 or Wierschowski 1995, 257–272. Kiernan 2012, 89 pointed out that a discussion of longer Roman pilgrimages (until then better known from medieval itineraries) had still to be studied. Spickermann 2003, 65 and 77f with some examples.
- 4 But see Introduction and Stevens, this volume.
- 5 Kiernan 2012, 82.
- 6 For a fundamental study, see Kiernan 2012, 90–95. Also Jullian 1920, 154–155.
- 7 Aupert *et al.* 2008, 29.
- 8 Spickermann 2003, 290.
- 9 Möhn: Niffeler 1988, 137–138. Heckenmünster and Pelm: Lobüscher 2002, 14, 17.
- 10 This function was addressed during the conference ‘Theaterbauten als Teil monumentaler Heiligtümer in den nordwestlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum. Architektur – Organisation – Nutzung. Internationales Kolloquium in Augusta Raurica’, 18–21 September 2013. Cultic events such as dancing, singing, dramatic performances and gladiator fights are discussed in Kiernan 2012, 90. See also Nielsen 2002; Spickermann 2003, 291; Tardy 2009.
- 11 For further examples of the spatial interrelationship between buildings, see Brunet-Gaston 2008, 283.
- 12 Binsfeld *et al.* 1988, 30. For further inscriptions from Gaul with religious content, see Fincker and Tassaux 1992; Tardy 2009, 175f.
- 13 Fernandez-Götz 2012, 513; Kiernan 2012, 90.
- 14 Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 362–376; Kiernan 2012, 91–95; Spickermann 2003, 291. The *incubatio* is controversially discussed for the west. For a critical opinion, see Renberg 2006.
- 15 Köhler 2013, 227 with alternative interpretations of this building type.
- 16 Walser 1984; Wiblé 2013.
- 17 Cf. Spickermann 2009, 263 about ‘Straßenheiligtümer’, i.e. sacred sites at the roadside, which do not constitute real pilgrimage sanctuaries.
- 18 Aachen: Schaub 2013a, 172. Hochscheid: Weisgerber 1975. Sceaux-du-Gâtinais: Hofeneder 2011, 426. Sanxay: Aupert *et al.* 2008, 87; Grenier 1960, 554.
- 19 Köhler 2013.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 209–212.
- 21 Krutzler 2011, 80f.
- 22 A study of other types of sanctuaries in connection with pilgrimages cannot be undertaken in this article. An interesting case for future study are, for example, sanctuaries

- built on elevated plateaus such as the Martberg (Germany), which very probably played a key role in the eastern *Treveri* region: Nickel 2013, 369.
- 23 Künzl 2013, 113.
 - 24 *CIL* 13.1983; Wierschowski 2001, 334f.
 - 25 Ehmig 2013, 301f.
 - 26 Aldhouse-Green 1999, 92; Jufer and Lunginbühl 2001, 12 and 94–96 on Apollo. On the name Borvo and its continued existence in e.g. Bourbon-Lancy, Bourbon-l'Archambault and Bourbonne-es-Bains (all France), see Hofeneder 2008, 358f. On the etymology of Belenus in connection with the sources, see Hofeneder 2011, 140.
 - 27 Stanna: Beck 2009, 451. Salus: Aupert 2012, 316. Apollo Grannus and Sirona: Eingartner *et al.* 1993, 127–134.
 - 28 Kakoschke 2002, 446f; Sikora 1983 with the Greek inscription.
 - 29 Deyts 1994. For further female river deities, see Beck 2009, 365–403.
 - 30 Schaub 2013b, 265f.
 - 31 Künzl 2013, 127. For further male deities of river sources, see Beck 2009, 404–462.
 - 32 Beck 2009, 512.
 - 33 *CIL* 13.5619; Aldhouse-Green 1999, 92.
 - 34 Auson. *Ordo urbium nobilium* 20, 170; compare Hofeneder 2011, 290f.
 - 35 Beck 2009, 344.
 - 36 Kakoschke 2002, 505–508 defines spatially limited movement as any journey under 50 km. He assumes that the spa guests from more distant places of origin stayed in the relevant places due to other, e.g. professional, reasons as a certain percentage of visitors undoubtedly came from the immediate vicinity.
 - 37 Wierschowski 1995, 257 and 272.
 - 38 Bourgeois 1991, 236 emphasizes the fact that only 20 out of 520 dedicators come from outside of Gaul, which indicates an indigenous cult for locals. Even though it is safe to assume that the majority of visitors originated from Gaul, 20 attested long-distance journeys is a relatively high number when taken together with the number of estimated cases where the actual starting point of the journey is unknown.
 - 39 Even though no individuals from Germanic provinces are attested in sanctuaries of other provinces (Kakoschke 2004, 202) and only few people are known from outside the respective province, several ca. 100 km journeys to thermal springs can be expected as will be shown in the following.
 - 40 Allen 2003, 403–416; Talbert 2010, 118.
 - 41 Remarkably, the large thermal baths of the legions stationed in the Rhine provinces have not been included. This indicates that the map readers were from a civil context – a hint that to my knowledge has not been considered thus far.
 - 42 In the Gallic and Germanic regions, the following places are characterized by this symbol: Praetorium Agrippinae/Valkenburg (the Netherlands), Andesina/Grand, Aquis Segeste/Sceaux-du-Gâtinais, Aquis Nisincii/Saint-Honoré-les-Bains, Aquae Bormonis/Bourbon-Lancy, Aquis Calidis/Vichy, Aquis Segete/Moingt-Montbrison (?), Aquae Sextiae/Aix-en-Provence, Aquis Convenarum/Bagnères-de-Bigorre (all in France). A particularly clear conversion of the Peutinger map into real geographical terms can be found at <http://www.omnesviae.org/de/>. According to Pliny, *HN*. 31, 4 the reason why Aquae Sextiae was so significant results from the bodies of water in the surrounding area (Hofeneder 2008, 401). The identification of Aquis Segete with Moingt-Montbrison is uncertain.
 - 43 Sceaux-du-Gâtinais and Bourbon-Lancy: Beck 2009, 317–320, 429–431. Vichy: Mitton 2006–2007, 28, 58–59, 63. Grand: Bertaux 1993; Dechezleprêtre 2010.
 - 44 Hofeneder 2011, 225–230.
 - 45 A good example is the sanctuary of Nehalennia situated on a bank of the Scheldt estuary on the way from the Rhine to the British Islands: see Spickermann 2009.
 - 46 Nuber 2011, 65.

- 47 The absence of the relevant places cannot be explained by the late Antique origin and the discontinuation of certain areas located on the right-hand bank of the Rhine alone as Aachen, situated on the left-hand side of the river, is also missing and places on the right-hand side of the Rhine such as Königen, Rottenburg, Rottweil and Theilenhofen are represented.
- 48 Künzl 2013, 90; Nuber 2011, 65.
- 49 Künzl 2013, 144 and 149.
- 50 *CIL* 13.7564; Czysz 1994, 64; Becker and Klein 1855, 519.
- 51 *CIL* 13.11716; Nuber 1993, 144f.
- 52 *CIL* 13.11714; Kakoschke 2002, 168–169.
- 53 *CIL* 13.6304; Kakoschke 2002, 482, note 2453.
- 54 Schaub 2013a, 161–180; White 2009. According to Gary White and Andreas Schaub, the older phase (not shown on Figure 8.3) of the southern hospital in the region of Elisen-garten consisted of the characteristic apposition of small rooms that were equipped in each case with a hearth (pers. comm.). Regarding Münster spa: Kohlberger-Schaub 2014.
- 55 Schaub 2013a, 181–183.
- 56 Galsterer 1992.
- 57 Schaub 2007, 131; 2013b, 263.
- 58 *CIL* 13.7833; Kakoschke 2002, 91.
- 59 Schaub 2013a, 169.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 167, 184f.
- 61 For the inscriptions of these tombstones, see Aldhouse-Green 2006, 269; Collingwood and Wright 1965, 43, no. 139, 45f, no. 143f, 47, no. 146f, 51–53, no. 156, 158, 160.
- 62 Sauer 2005, 93.
- 63 Solin. 21; compare Hofeneder 2008, 401 note 2926; and Hofeneder 2011, 235. The descriptions are more detailed for the *Narbonensis* province and Italy. A sacred grotto in Marseille with dark spring water is mentioned by Luc. 3, 399–452 one hundred years after the destruction of the sanctuary so that this report should only be accepted with reserve (compare Sauer 2005, 107f): according to this source, the nature was untouched despite the altars, human blood and primitive wooden figures. The Clitumnus sanctuary in Italy is described at length in a letter written by Pliny (*Ep.* 8,8); compare Lefèvre 1988, 258–263.
- 64 Solin. 22,10; compare Hofeneder 2011, 240–243.
- 65 Aldhouse-Green 2006, 269; Collingwood and Wright 1965, 44, no. 140, 47, no. 149, 52, no. 159, 54, no. 163. The stonemason may have been there for working reasons as well.
- 66 Wierschowski 2001, 445.
- 67 Allason-Jones and McKay 1985, 14–16, nos. 5–7.
- 68 *CIL* 13.5919; Kakoschke 2002, 180.
- 69 *CIL* 13.5922; Kakoschke 2002, 545.
- 70 *CIL* 13.11471; Kakoschke 2002, 324.
- 71 Bérard 1997, 215–223; Bourgeois 1991, 236; *CIL* 12.361. Lèon: *CIL* 12.5679.
- 72 *CIL* 13.356 and 13.352; Spickermann 1994, 420; Wierschowski 2001, 263 also mentions a certain *Titus Claudius Rufus*, who is attested in a second inscription in the 25 km distant Saint-Pé-d’Ardet.
- 73 Kakoschke 2002, 383.
- 74 *CIL* 13.414; Bourgeois 1991, 236; Wierschowski 1995, 264.
- 75 *CIL* 13.1376–1377.
- 76 Tomb stone: *CIL* 13.1383. Bricks: Corrocher *et al.* 2008, 180.
- 77 A distance of over 180 km between the origo and the place of dedication is attested for the Ruteni, Manutia, the Segusiaveri, Cassia Touta (both dedicated altars in Bagnères-de-Luchon), Iulia Tiberina from Chester (the place of dedication was Aachen), the

- Treveri, Peregrinus, the Mediomatrici, Rusonia Aventina (both Bath), the Mediomatrici, Sextilia Sexti f. and Rufinus from Vienne (both Bourbonnes-les-Bains).
- 78 Brouwer 1989, 255–258; Dillon 2013, 186, 191.
- 79 Isings 1957, 122–123.
- 80 For the new interpretation as thermal bath buildings, see Fujii 2001.
- 81 For example Astorga (Tafalla *et al.* 2003) and Merida (Bejarano Osorio 2005).
- 82 These objects have been compiled by Fujii 2009 and Painter 1975. A further, recently found object originates from Casteggio (Grazia Diani 2009).
- 83 Berger 2002, 15 and 64–65.
- 84 Künzl 2013, 112. For further souvenirs, see Höpken 2004. Generally also Künzl and Koeppl 2002. For souvenirs from Hadrian's Wall, see Breeze *et al.* 2012.
- 85 Kiernan 2012, 96–100.
- 86 For examples of eye models, see Fauduet 2002; on *vulvae*: Künzl 2001, 259f; and *phalli* among other objects: de Cazanove and Barriere 2012 as well as Nickel 2013, 379.
- 87 Aldhouse-Green 1999; Deyts 1983; 1994.
- 88 Romeuf 2000.
- 89 Sauer 2005, 92–93, 147–148.
- 90 Teegen 1999, 259–277; Sauer 2005, 168f.
- 91 Lamps: Fauduet 2010, 268. Curse tablets, for example in Bath: Tomlin 1988, 79–277. Fauduet 2010, 258–263 gives an overview of jewellery offerings in Gaul. Miniature offerings: Kiernan 2009, 215–216, especially miniature weapons: Caumont 2011. Animals: Méniel 2012 with recent literature. Fruit: Prat and Cabanis 2006–2007.
- 92 For general information on ritual deposits in sanctuaries, see Schäfer and Witteyer 2013.
- 93 Kiernan 2012.

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9 Visiting the ancestors

Ritual movement in Rome's urban borderland

Saskia Stevens

The previous chapters in this book explored pilgrimages that required – at times – precarious journeys that could last up to a few weeks. This contribution, on the other hand, investigates a local phenomenon in the ancient world: the regular and planned visits the Romans paid to their ancestors outside the city. Can these visits be considered as a pilgrimage even though the journey hardly posed any challenges and the distance and timespan were relatively short? Most of these visits were undertaken on an individual basis and the final destination varied to some extent. Yet, many of the aspects that were inherent to the visits of the Romans to their deceased relatives seem to share characteristics of pilgrimage that Joy McCorriston has so clearly set out in the second chapter of this current volume.¹

The visits to the dead were ritual and ritualised movements between the city and the urban periphery, the area immediately outside the city boundaries, and involved the performance of certain rituals and feasting at the actual site. As most tomb monuments were part of a larger necropolis, the manifestation of the social status of both the deceased and the visitors also played an important role in the tomb visits and rituals. To better understand the Roman habit of visiting the ancestors and to explore a possible characterisation of pilgrimage, the paper addresses the following aspects: the topographic setting, the nature and frequency of the visits, the rituals that took place during the visits, and the implications and significance of the movements and rituals involved. The focus of this paper is on republican and early imperial Rome and the archaeological data, epigraphic evidence and Ovid's *Fasti* provide the main primary source material.

Topographic setting

The pilgrimage under examination in this paper took place in a rather confined space and moment in time: people travelled from the city to the area beyond the city limit, and back again. This could all happen in the course of one day. The area to which the visitors travelled immediately outside the city was part of the urban borderland. The borderland is an area that comes into existence when a border is created.² These borders can be both material, such as a city wall, but also immaterial as, for example, the *pomerium*, Rome's ritual boundary. These zones on either side of a boundary are influenced by the presence of the border and their status is

emphasised due to the border's vicinity. The most relevant border for the current paper is the city wall, as it legally defined a Roman city and demarcated the limit beyond which the dead were to be buried.³ Roman law prescribed that the dead were to be buried or cremated outside the city and the tombs were often clustered together in *necropoleis* located along the main arteries leaving the cities.⁴

The Romans visited deceased relatives not only to celebrate their memory, but also to propitiate them.⁵ Treating the dead with respect was important and negligence could have grave consequences. Ovid, for example, talks about unhappy and neglected ancestral souls and ghosts that haunted the cities and fields until the proper honours were paid.⁶ To reach the tombs people would cross a series of urban and civic borders and move through various spheres. First, they would pass through one of the city gates, cross the *pomerium*, which defined Rome's ritual boundary.⁷ Next, they would geographically distance themselves from the urban centre, traversing a zone of negotiation filled with inscriptions, signs and symbols of civic and political influence. Then, depending on where the family's tomb was located, the tomb-side rituals of the visit commenced. The tombs closest to the city gates often belonged to citizens that based on their merit or valour were honoured by the local town council with a funerary monument in this prominent place.⁸ In Pompeii, for example, the area immediately outside the city gate can be identified as *locus publicus*, land owned by the community that should not be appropriated by private individuals. The tombs that were built inside this 100 Roman feet wide zone all contained the inscription *locus datus decreto decurionum*, or its abbreviation: *LDDD*. The tombs built beyond the *locus publicus* lacked the reference to this permission.⁹ The tombs in Pompeii's *locus publicus* outside the Porta Ercolano, for example, belonged to the town's ruling and priestly elite, who apparently earned this privilege.¹⁰ Among the deceased buried there are *duoviri*, *sacerdotes publicae* and an *augustalis*, a priest of the imperial cult.¹¹ A well-known example from Rome is the tomb of Bibulus, built at 120 m. outside the Porta Fontinalis. The inscription on the monument states that Bibulus got the tomb plot ("*locus datus est*") by decree of the Senate on account of his valour, "*virtutis causa*".¹² Generally, the more important and affluent deceased were put to rest in ostentatious and conspicuous funerary monuments, sometimes in very close vicinity to the city gate. The lesser well-off, on the other hand, had to make their way to less obvious tombs, usually a bit further away from the city and often scattered among their richer counterparts.¹³ As a result, onlookers and participants alike could immediately see what your place was in society based on the tomb you were visiting.¹⁴

Moving into the borderland thus involved moving into a sphere different from the world of the living enclosed by its numerous civic boundaries. The urban borderland served as a transitional zone between city and countryside, but it was also a zone in which the dead and the living could coexist. One of the so-called Fucino reliefs (Figure 9.1), dated to the first century AD, depicts such a borderland outside a Roman town, possibly Marruvium, located in the modern Abruzzo area.¹⁵ The relief shows an urban settlement, demarcated by a fortification wall, outside which there are several monumental tombs. The tombs' extra-urban setting was stipulated by law and archaeological data from many Roman sites substantiate



Figure 9.1 Relief of the Torlonia collection, depicting a town and its surroundings. With kind permission of the Soprintendenza Archeologia dell'Abruzzo-Chieti.

this.¹⁶ Even though the dead were clearly located outside towns and cities and not wanted inside the world of the living, their location in the immediate borderland signified a close relation to city life.¹⁷ During the funerary procession, the *pompa funebris*, the deceased was transferred from the world of the living to the extramural borderland, the territory proper for the dead. After performing the required funerary rituals the deceased relatives were transformed into ancestors that were venerated at tomb monuments.¹⁸ This ambiguity – the unwanted corpse versus the respected ancestor – nicely suits the ambivalent and hybrid nature that is characteristic to the borderland.

Besides being the setting for deceased relatives that were properly disposed of, the extramural borderland was also the home to more obscure and polluting activities. A series of inscriptions from Rome found outside the so-called Servian wall, for example, contain edicts by the urban praetor Sentius, who took action against improper disposal of the dead.¹⁹ A total of three inscriptions has been found, placed at the distance of between 220 and 290 m. from the city wall. The edict, dated to the early first century BC, prohibits the construction of funeral pyres as well as the dumping of manure and dead bodies in the area between the inscriptions and the city wall. The area, in which the inscriptions were found, outside Rome's Esquiline Gate, was renowned for the communal burial pits that were supposedly used for the burials of the poor. However, not everyone used these pits set aside for this purpose or paid proper homage to the dead and for this reason

the urban praetor had to intervene.²⁰ Finally, literary sources contain references to extraordinary events that took place in the borderland among the tombs. Horace, for example, talks in one of his Satires about thieves and witches, who collect bones and noxious herbs in the night and Petronius mentions a man who changed into a werewolf among the tomb monuments.²¹ The characters mentioned in these sources are hybrid and mysterious, and do not seem to have belonged to the world inside the fortifications. Instead, they roamed the extramural borderland outside of society, and yet, at the same time, they were indispensable to the definition of that society's identity.

Defining society in another, more positive way were the many villas that were located just outside Rome. The Fucino relief shows one of these villas, which were often large agricultural estates with a luxury element to it, in the foreground. Many of these villas were owned by well-to-do Romans, who escaped to the countryside regularly, exporting city life to these estates and receiving their friends and colleagues in a more secluded setting.²² These villas contributed to the monumentalisation and enhancement of the landscape surrounding the cities. Some of these villas were accessible via narrow entrances in the midst of *necropoleis*, not unlike the current estates along the Via Appia today, owned by Italian movie stars and film directors. In contrast to urban life, there was apparently no problem to mix with the dead outside the city in the borderland; another example of the borderland's paradoxical status.

Looking at this collection of data, the extramural borderland that housed most of the funerary monuments can be defined as an area that housed entities that were unwanted inside the urban setting. At the same time, some of its users, such as the owners of the villas, enhanced the extra-urban area, advertising the town that lay ahead. It was an area of negotiation, a zone in which the dead could coexist with the living, but also a zone that was indispensable for establishing and defining the community's identity within the walls.

Ritual movement and visits

Even though the geographic location and the nature of the events taking place in the borderland seem to place them outside of society, there was also a close connection. Regular and planned movement from the city to the borderland, and back, particularly visualised some of these connections. A few times a year, on set dates, the Romans made their ways from the city to the borderland to commemorate their deceased relatives. Ancestors, particularly illustrious ones, played an important role in the daily life of the Romans. Their wax *imagines* were often on display in the (semi)public part of the house, the atrium, where they oversaw the daily business taking place and in a way literally supported the social status of the house owner. The physical remains of the ancestors, however, were buried outside the city and also required care and attention. Rome's main *necropoleis* were located along the main arteries leaving the city, the most extended of which was the one along the Via Appia. Thanks to extensive excavations that took place in Rome's Salario region in the early twentieth century, south of the Villa Borghese Park, the

necropolis along the Via Salaria is also well known and has brought forward many inscriptions and archaeological remains.²³ Recently, excavations in the Vatican area have also uncovered large sections of the extensive necropolis along the so-called Via Triumphalis.

A few times a year the people of Rome would visit their ancestors outside the city. First of all, there were the so-called *parentationes*, general funeral obsequies for parents or near relatives.²⁴ These visits were individually determined and could coincide with the deceased's birthday or the anniversary of his or her passing away. An inscription from Rome found in a *columbarium*, a collective tomb that housed cremations, for example, mentions four celebrations a year honouring the deceased, besides lighting a lamp with incense three times a month:

[. . .] that they will use the revenues from the *insulae* to celebrate his memory four times a year with sacrifices on his birthday, on the *dies rosationis* and *violae* and during the *parentalia*, and that on the kalends, nones and ides, each month, a lamp with incense will be burnt.²⁵

However, there were also more structured and organised visits. The inscription above refers to the *dies rosationis* and *violae*, holidays that were celebrated in May and June when relatives left roses, violets and other flowers at the tombs.²⁶ Not only epigraphic evidence survives for these celebrations: meticulous research at the Santa Rosa necropolis in the Vatican has also brought forward archaeological evidence. The marble altar of Passiena Prima and Lucius Passienus Evaristus constitutes a good example (Figure 9.2). The rectangular altar, dated to the Neronian period, contains an inscription in the centre displaying the names of the deceased.²⁷ On the left and right of the inscription cupids hold a *cornucopia* from which a rich flower garland drops down. Just above the cornice that runs across the altar small holes were discovered with traces of metal. Archaeologists have interpreted these as remains of hooks to which a real garland could be attached.²⁸ This means that on a commemorative holiday when flowers were brought to the funerary monument as part of the ritual, real flowers decorated the altar. Once these had waned, the carved flowers remained, adorning the altar until the next holiday.²⁹ This example beautifully illustrates the ephemeral aspect of many of the rituals, tomb visits and tributes paid to the dead. The chosen design made sure, however, that the altar was never deprived of floral ornaments.

Besides these holidays that seem to have been privately celebrated and were mainly about honouring the dead by bringing flowers to the tombs, the inscription also refers to the *Parentalia*, another festival to commemorate the dead but with a larger public component. Ovid wrote in his *Fasti* about the *Parentalia* that took place every year on February 13:

And the grave must be honoured. Appease your fathers' Spirits, and bring little gifts to the tombs you built. Their shades ask little, piety they prefer to costly offerings: no greedy deities haunt the Stygian depths. A tile wreathed round with garlands offered is enough, a scattering of meal, and a few grains

of salt, and bread soaked in wine, and loose violets: set them on a brick left in the middle of the path. Not that I veto larger gifts, but these please the Shades: add prayers and proper words to the fixed fires.³⁰

According to Ovid, one of the aims of this festival was to placate the dead by, preferably, little offerings. The celebrations involved had many similarities with funerary rituals and underline the repetitive nature of the rituals involved.³¹ The



Figure 9.2 Funerary altar of Passiena Prima and L. Passienus Evaristus, Vatican necropolis of Santa Rosa. With kind permission of the Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Vaticani.

Parentalia started with a public sacrifice made by the head Vestal Virgin, announcing the beginning of the holiday.³² Next was a visit to the tombs, where *sacra privata*, rituals and offerings performed and paid for by the family, were carried out.³³ This second part was more private in nature and could naturally vary per family or individual, but as Ovid suggested, needed not be too elaborate. Closely linked to this festival were the *Feralia* and the *Caristia*, celebrated on the 21 and 22 of February respectively, that marked the end of the festival for appeasing the dead.³⁴ The eight days between the *Parentalia* and the *Feralia* have been interpreted as a period of (renewed) mourning, the end of which was marked by a tomb-side banquet. On the following day the celebrations came to a close with the celebration of the *Caristia*, when the families reintegrated into society and civic life recommenced.³⁵

Besides Ovid's literary description, there are fragments preserved of inscribed calendars, also called *fasti*. These calendars have only been preserved fragmentarily and most of them can be dated to the early Julio-Claudian period. The archaeological evidence has shown that these calendars were not only put up in Rome, but also in other towns in Italy and even in the provinces. These inscribed calendars were on public display and although each city had its own version, comparative studies have shown that there were many similarities with Rome's calendar.³⁶

The *fasti* not only showed when citizens were allowed to congregate in their assemblies (*dies comitalis*) or start a legal action (*dies fasti*), but also included an overview of the various civic and religious festivals, when they were celebrated and on what day.³⁷ As a result, on a festive day all people that were members of a particular community would participate in a collective celebratory ritual as indicated on the common calendar. All layers of society would be seen taking part, complying with the rituals of the civic society, creating a sense of *communitas*, of belonging.

Even though there were plenty of collective aspects to the *Parentalia*, it was also a moment of differentiation. Not everyone would visit the same communal monument but principally the tombs of deceased family members and, as a result, these visits also visualised the social hierarchy. After all, only the most prominent families of society would have a monumental tomb located closest to the city's edge, whereas the lesser affluent would find their way to inconspicuous tombs to honour their ancestors, who might even be sharing a tomb or *columbarium* with other members of a particular *familia* or profession-related *collegium*.³⁸ Even though many of the *columbaria* were lavishly decorated on the inside, the discrepancy between these inward-focused communal funerary monuments and the stand-alone travertine or marble-clad monuments was obvious.³⁹ The various processions to these monuments made this hierarchy even more visible, not only for the participants, but also for the spectators as they could see who visited what tomb.⁴⁰

Visiting the ancestors: The archaeology

Besides the epigraphic and literary references, and the altar from the Vatican area mentioned above, there is other archaeological evidence for the rituals that took place at the tombs. During the *Feralia* that marked the end of the ancestor commemoration festival a tomb-side banquet was held. In some *necropoleis* there is evidence for kitchen facilities to prepare meals, and at Isola Sacra, the necropolis

of Portus, a masonry *biclinium* was discovered in front of a *columbarium*.⁴¹ In the Vatican *necropoleis* a tomb was uncovered with a roof terrace that could be used for meals.⁴² Keith Hopkins vividly reconstructed the scene: “we have to imagine Roman families picnicking *al fresco* at the family tomb, where, according to Christian critics, they often got boisterously drunk, with their dead relatives around them.”⁴³

Also the dead in poorer graves, often consisting of only an urn in the ground, were catered for. To allow for a good communication channel, a terracotta pipe was inserted into the ground above the urn and these could be used for libations of wine or oil.⁴⁴ In all, tombs of all shapes and sizes were equipped to accommodate various ritual celebrations in such a way that they simultaneously made the social standing of the tomb’s owner and his or her family obvious.

The various aspects discussed above come together in a tomb monument that was discovered along the Via Latina, a road that diverges from the Via Appia, in the nineteenth century (Figure 9.3).⁴⁵ Inscriptions reveal that the tomb belonged to

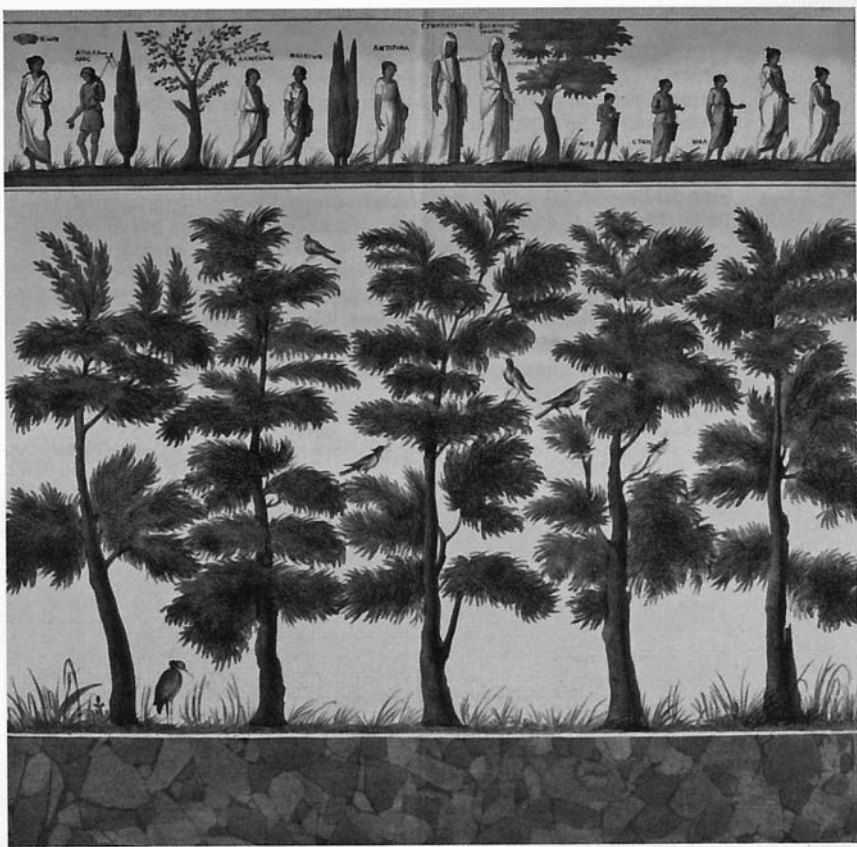


Figure 9.3 Drawing of the paintings inside the tomb of Patron. Tav. II in: Secchi, P. Giampietro. *Monumenti inediti d'un antico sepolcro di famiglia greca scoperto in Roma su la Via Latina*. Roma: Tipografia Salviucci, 1843.

a Greek physician, Patron and his family. Based on a stylistic analysis the monument has been dated to the late first century BC.⁴⁶ While the tomb was fairly plain on the outside, its inside contained elaborate wall paintings. The lower zone shows a natural landscape with pine trees and a number of various birds, among which is a heron, a bird associated with Athena, which might be a reference to the physician's wife, who was called Athenō.⁴⁷ The landscape paintings have been interpreted as a funerary garden that may have surrounded the tomb, or as a reference to a permanent idyllic realm, such as the Elysian Fields. An epigram in Greek inscribed on the tomb's wall brings the landscape further to life:

There are neither brambles nor thorns inside my tomb, no bat cries while flying over, but every possible sort of enchanting tree grows its branches all heavy with magnificent fruits inside this urn. There is a nightingale singing its melodious song, the sound of a cicada resonates sweet as a lily, a swallow is chirping eruditely, a cricket makes a harmonious murmur, starting elegant songs from the bottom of its chest. . . .⁴⁸

Above the idyllic landscape painting, a narrow frieze runs along the top of the eastern tomb wall and partly continues on the northern wall. The frieze contains a group of people in movement, all fitted with their own painted name tag. Despite this typical Greek tradition of labelling images, the figures are displayed in Roman style.⁴⁹ The frieze on the eastern wall has been almost completely preserved and shows a group of ten people moving in a procession. The north wall frieze is only partly preserved and depicts two figures moving in opposite directions. Both groups are possibly walking towards the entrance of the tomb, which may have been on the south side.⁵⁰ The procession supposedly illustrates a visit to the tomb by the deceased's family members and accompanied by slaves and possibly priests.

The main characters, Athenō (ΓΥΝΗ ΠΑΤΡΟΝΟC ΑΘΗΝΩ) and her daughter Appoleia (ΘΥΓΑΤΗΡ ΠΑΤΡΟΝΟC ΑΠΠΟΛΗΙΑ) are positioned in the centre of the frieze, veiled and standing taller than the other participants. The social hierarchy within the procession is therefore instantly visible. In front of the two women, a group of three smaller figures (children?) carry objects: the first one, a boy, holds a receptacle, the middle girl carries a plate and a basket and the third girl holds a small container. Their short tunics may be an indication of their status as slaves. Two women dressed in long white garments sporting a sophisticated braided hairstyle lead the procession. They have been identified as priestesses, possibly overseeing the performance of the *sacra privata*.⁵¹

Visiting the ancestors: A local pilgrimage?

The tomb of Patron provides a visual representation of Roman commemorative culture that we mainly know through literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence. Going back to McCorriston's characteristics of pilgrimage, can we now identify

the visits the Romans paid to their deceased family members as (local) pilgrimage? Mobility (1), the first hallmark, is certainly present as the Romans visited their ancestors in the *necropoleis* outside the city's edges in the urban borderland. Even though the trips were rather short and hardly challenging, they did involve passing various civic boundaries and moving into a zone that was anything but the world as it was inside the city walls, yet closely linked at the same time; it was a zone where the living and the dead could coexist and where location, size and grandeur of the deceased ancestors' tomb monuments confirmed the social identity (2) of their surviving family members. Confirmation to local norms and participation in communal rituals expressed civic identity and a sense of belonging (*communitas*). Active exchange (3) can hardly be expected from the visited party. Still, the living paid tribute to the deceased and left offerings for appeasement. In return it was thought the dead would not bother the living family members or haunt their houses; they may even have offered some sort of protection. The temporal punctuation (4) was set by the Roman calendar that organised and arranged civic life in both the public and private sphere. Finally, the performative aspect (5) knows various expressions, ranging from processions, sacrifices and libations to leaving flowers and tomb-side dining.

Based on these aspects that can be associated with the regular tomb visits of the Romans to their ancestors and the accordance with the characteristics of pilgrimage mentioned earlier, I would argue that these visits can indeed be seen as local pilgrimage. What does this categorisation then add to our understanding and knowledge of these Roman rituals? First, it emphasises the systemised and (to some extent) standardised nature of the rituals that recurred annually. Secondly, it underlines the social aspect of the visits and how they played an important role in the family's social and civic identity. Finally, it sheds light on the way in which the civic centre was connected with the extra-urban borderland. Visiting the ancestors was a fixed entry on the city's ritual calendar and as such played an important role in the manifestation of citizenship, simultaneously connecting the civic centre with the extra-urban borderland.

Notes

- 1 See also McCorriston 2011, 53–55, for an elaborate discussion of the definitions and typologies. See also the Introduction to this volume.
- 2 The borderland is a concept that is widely studied in human geography and the social sciences. See, for example, Baud and Van Schendel 1997, 216; Donnan and Wilson 2001, 4–5; Newman 2006, 179.
- 3 As the city of Rome developed almost continuously, a more flexible definition was introduced to define the city's legal limit: "*continentia aedificia*", "until where there is contiguous building". For example, Marcel. *Dig.* 50.16.87. See also Favro 2006, 191; Stevens 2017, 171–172.
- 4 It is often suggested that the ritual boundary, the *pomerium*, stipulated the burial of the dead outside the city. However, in the many legal sources that refer to this restriction the urban limit is indicated as a negation of *urbs* or *civitas* (e.g. "*non in urbe*" or "*non in civitate*"), for example, Cicero *Leg.* 2.58 and Ulp. *Dig.* 47.12.3.5. Not once is there a direct reference to the *pomerium*. Moreover, archaeological evidence from Rome – the

- only city for which there is actual evidence for the existence of a *pomerium* – has shown that tombs were, in fact, constructed inside the pomerial boundary of Claudius. For a more detailed discussion of the relation between the *pomerium* and the location of burials in Rome, see Stevens 2017, 180; 184–185.
- 5 Graham 2006, 37–38; Hopkins 1983, 233–235; Scullard 1981, 74.
 - 6 Ovid. *Fasti* 2.547–554. In May, during the *Lemuria*, the dead were also thought to roam the world of the living during the night. At the end of the festival, a ritual took place to rid the city of the unwanted guests. Ovid. *Fasti* 5.421–444.
 - 7 The *pomerium* was closely linked to the city wall and they often coincided. The *pomerium* in Rome, however, was extended at least twice by the emperors Claudius, and Vespasian and Titus. The exact course of the *pomerium* after the extensions is hard to reconstruct as only a limited number of pomerial markers that indicate the extensions has been found. Stevens 2017, 51–60; see also Coarelli 2009.
 - 8 Antico Gallina 1997, 209; 215. See also Cic. *Leg.* 2.58.
 - 9 Kockel 1983, 12–13.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, 13.
 - 11 *CIL* 10.1026; 10.1030; 10.1042.
 - 12 *CIL* 6.1319. It is not clear if Bibulus' tomb is also positioned in Rome's *locus publicus*. From a topographical point of view it could have been part of the southern part of the *Campus Martius*, Rome's major *locus publicus* and a renowned location for the burials of prominent members of society from the late republican period onwards.
 - 13 The *necropoleis* at Portus and in the Vatican constitute good examples of how burials of various social classes could mix. See, for example, Liverani and Spinola 2010, 161–169.
 - 14 Borbonus 2014, 7–8.
 - 15 Giuliani 2001, 41.
 - 16 Cic. *Leg.* 2.58; Serv. *Ad Aen* 11.206; Ulp. *Dig.* 47.12.3.5; *Cod. Iust.* 3.44.12.
 - 17 Hopkins 1983, 233; Stevens 2017, 161–166.
 - 18 For a description of Roman funerary rituals see, for example, Toynbee 1971, 43–54. Also Yasin 2005, 439.
 - 19 *CIL* 6.31614. Le Gall 1980–1981, 149; Bodel 1994, 41. The Latin text refers to *cadaver* (“dead body”) rather than to *corpus*. *Cadaver* implies the unwanted and rejected status of the body, whereas a *corpus* would be a corpse that was disposed of in a proper way. See Allara 1995, 71; 76.
 - 20 Another example of civic intervention and negotiation in the urban borderland is the case of Titus Suedius Clemens who settled a dispute on behalf of the emperor Vespasian between Pompeii and some Pompeians who had illegally appropriated land that belonged to the community. Also this intervention is epigraphically recorded (*CIL* 10.1018).
 - 21 Hor. *Sat.* 1.8 and Petronius *Sat.* 62.
 - 22 Champlin 1982, 106–109; Witcher 2012, 212–214.
 - 23 Bodel 2014, 180–181.
 - 24 Scheid 2005, 193–200.
 - 25 *CIL* 6.10248.
 - 26 See also *CIL* 5.4871; 11.1436; Graham 2006, 37; Toynbee 1971, 62–63.
 - 27 Liverani and Spinola 2010, 240–241.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, 28.
 - 29 No traces of colour have been found on this altar, but one can imagine the flower garland would have looked even more realistic in its original state when the marble still had colours.
 - 30 Ovid. *Fasti* 2.533–542, translation: Loeb Classical Library.
 - 31 Liverani and Spinola 2010, 25–26.
 - 32 This particular aspect is mentioned in the fourth-century AD manuscript of Philocalus *Fasti Furii Philocali*. Scullard 1981, 75.

- 33 *IEAquil* 280; *CIL* 5.2072.
- 34 Scullard 1981, 74.
- 35 Liverani and Spinola 2010, 25.
- 36 Rüpke 2011, 21–22; Scullard 1981, 46–47.
- 37 Rüpke 2011, 24–32; 50–55; Scullard 1981, 45.
- 38 Borbonus 2014, 12–14; Graham 2006, 45–47; Hopkins 1983, 211–217.
- 39 The excavations of the *necropoleis* in the Vatican area have shown that among the richer tomb monuments the ground was sprawled with simple cremation burials, often consisting of amphorae or other terracotta containers that were equipped with terracotta pipes to enable communication between the deceased family members and those that stayed behind. An example from Rome shows how important it was to maintain contact. In one of the walls of a *columbarium* along the Via Salaria, two terracotta pipes were found. At first the excavators could not make sense of them, but as they excavated further they discovered that the pipes descended two metres and ended directly above two ash urns that had disappeared under the later tomb building (Lugli 1917, 294–295).
- 40 For the social and political significance of processions in the Greek and Hellenistic world, see Chaniotis 2013, 34–36.
- 41 For example, *columbarium* B12 in Ostia contains a small kitchen for preparing tomb-side meals. Hopkins 1983, 233.
- 42 Liverani and Spinola 2010, 28. For evidence from the necropolis under St. Peter's basilica: 72 (tomb E), 77 (tomb F), 92 (tomb H). The archaeologists have interpreted the presence of internal staircases as an indicator for the presence of a terrace on top of the tomb building.
- 43 Hopkins 1983, 233.
- 44 Liverani and Spinola 2010, 29.
- 45 The monument was first published by Giampietro Secchi in 1843.
- 46 Bagnani 1953, 104; Blanc and Martinez 2008, 13; Tam Tinh 1974, 76.
- 47 Hom. *Il.* 10.274; Tam Tinh 1974, 77.
- 48 *CIG* 3.6270–6271 (1853). It is not clear where the epigram was exactly displayed. It has been suggested that the text was placed on the outside of the tomb monument so passers-by could read it. Blanc and Martinez 2008, 15; 28–29.
- 49 For example, the Homeric landscape paintings in the Vatican Museums. Thomas 1995, 115.
- 50 The *Ara Pacis* procession friezes can serve as a parallel. On both the north and south side, the procession moves towards the altar's main entrance on the west side.
- 51 Blanc and Martinez 2008, 19–22; Tam Tinh 1974, 76.

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10 The pilgrim and the arch

Paths and passageways at Qal'at Sem'an, Sinai, Abu Mena, and Tebessa

Ann Marie Yasin

At the shrine of St. Symeon the Stylite, Qal'at Sem'an in northwest Syria, a lavish church and monastic complex rose up in the later fifth century in the generation or two after the saint's death in 459 (Figure 10.1). The elaborate church structure consisted of four basilicas arranged to form the arms of a cross centered on the column that served as the saint's final retreat, a symbol of his extreme asceticism, and marker of his magnetism – according to one version of his biography, related by Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, the saint had the column raised, ultimately reaching 36 cubits (over 17 m, or close to 60 feet), to distance himself from the desirous reach of his fervent followers.¹ After Symeon's death, and the transferal of his corpse to Antioch, the column became an even more potent locus of sacrality standing in for the saint's absent body. At once relic and monument, the saint's pillar became an object of veneration, a major goal of pilgrimage, and a shorthand image of both the saint and the place on devotional objects such as tokens, glass jugs, and votive plaques as well as stone reliefs and graffiti.²

As symbol of the saint's sanctity and object of veneration, the column captured the imagination of contemporaries, engendering imitators in the saint's own lifetime and long after.³ On votive plaques and portable pilgrimage tokens and vessels, the stylite and his column appear framed by angels and devotees, or occasionally a menacing snake.⁴ In all these cases, the column regularly appears devoid of markers of the spatial and topographic context. In contrast to such isolated and icon-like depictions, the real column was deeply embedded within a consciously orchestrated natural and man-made environment.

In fact, the final goal of a pilgrim's journey, in this case the church building, together with the column relic and liturgical altar it sheltered, was but a piece of a larger spatial network of elements that structured and conditioned visitors' perceptions and movements.⁵ Looking at Qal'at Sem'an and three other contemporary Christian shrines, the present essay turns the spotlight on specific elements of the network itself – namely paths and the arches and gateways that punctuated them. Focusing on movement-structuring elements of routes and passageways allows us to better understand how such features transformed visitors' expectations and experience of the holy as the sanctuaries expanded to accommodate the dramatic intensification of Christian pilgrimage and veneration of saints in the late fifth through sixth centuries.

At each site, repetitions of architectural forms of passage punctuated moments of transition, directed sight lines, and helped knit the sacred landscape together

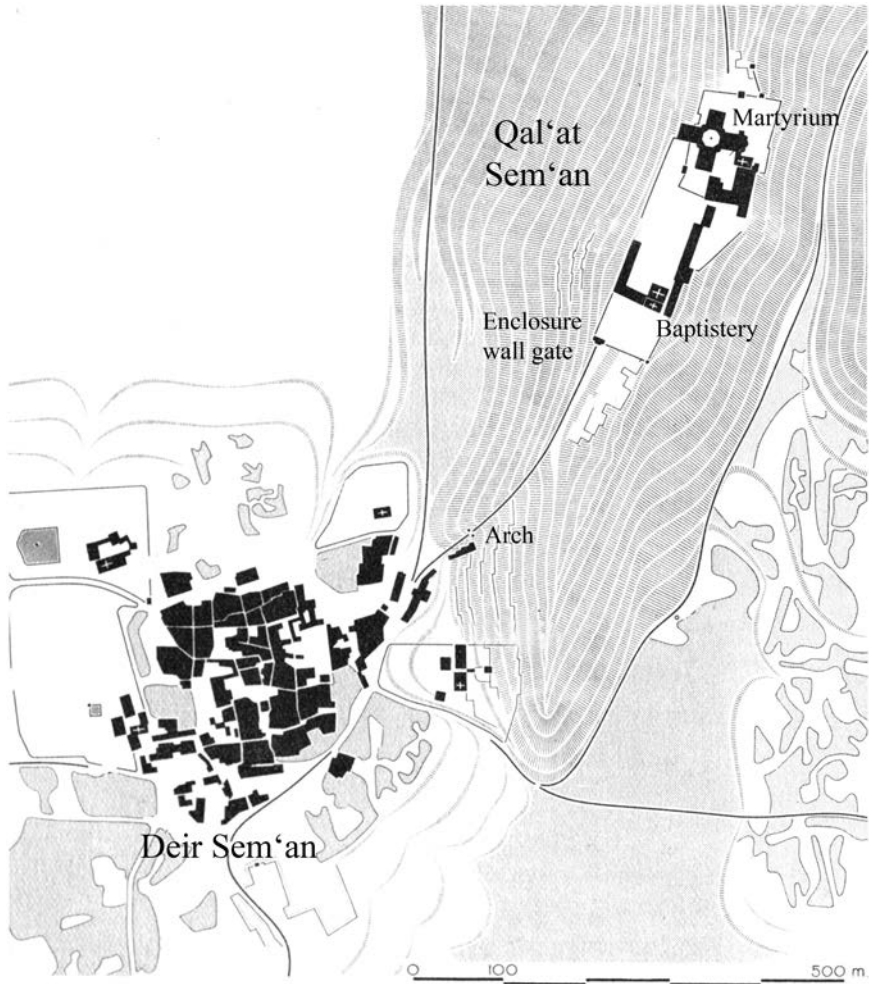


Figure 10.1 Qal'at Sem'an, plan of complex with village of Deir Sem'an (Telanissos), arch, and enclosure wall gate labeled (after Tchaleko, *Villages*, v. 2, pl. 132).

into a more coherent and comprehensible spatial configuration. The monumental arches at late antique pilgrimage sites accomplished this by drawing on both the form of Roman arches as well as much of their spatial and symbolic function. We can read William MacDonald's characterization of the freestanding Roman arch as equally applicable to our examples from late antique Qal'at Sem'an, Sinai, Abu Mena, and Tebessa:

Above all an arch is a mechanism of transition . . . the axis of its opening exerts powerful directional and organizing forces. The archway proper invites

passage and suggests the presence beyond of a place different from that before it. Archway axes organize space and traffic as funnels regulate flow. However chaotic that traffic or space may be, it is forced by the organizing forms and implications of the arch into more systematic patterns.⁶

In the context of pilgrimage landscapes, we see these organizational characteristics of monumental archways employed to structure experience and regulate access to the holy.

Closer examination of these roles of the physical and spatial network surrounding late antique shrines also helps us nuance our understanding of the liminal or transitional experience of pilgrims' movements more broadly. Geographically, each of our case study sites conforms to Victor and Edith Turner's characterization of major pilgrimage sites as peripheral to habitation areas.⁷ In punctuating and shaping movement through the "in between space" leading up to the shrine, the arches can be seen to intensify anticipation and religious experience working as, in the Turners' words, "sacred valves and resistances" that "build up a considerable load of reverent feeling, so that the final ingress to the holiest shrine of all will be for each pilgrim a momentous matter."⁸ Yet, where this description would characterize the arch structures as exclusively forward-pointing (toward the sacred center) and operating on a religious and psychological level, our examination of their formal and topographical properties highlights their significant spatial and social roles as well. Passageway architecture undoubtedly heightened pilgrims' anticipation for arrival at their goal, but I suggest it did so not by dint of sheer accumulation but rather through sophisticated visual and material strategies of repetition, evocation, and enframement. The passageway architecture focused increased attention on the shrine ahead by crafting architectonic foreshadowings and delimiting calculated sight lines up the way.

Importantly, however, while projecting pilgrims' attention forward, monumental gates and archways could also loop pilgrims' attention backwards by echoing the appearance of structures already encountered along the route. Our analysis of paths and monumental archways demonstrates how these features not only orient travelers in relation to the shrine but also visually and physically bind together multiple points along their route to create a more broadly coherent and integrated landscape. Thus, in addition to crafting visual and conceptual links to features ahead and behind, through their position straddling the street or path, passageway architecture at pilgrimage sites also elevated the prominence of the route *itself* and the very experience of movement along it. Moreover, focusing on archways also illuminates mechanisms deployed at shrines for the social and physical regulation of pilgrims. The narrowing of paths, the heightened demarcation of boundaries, and the funneling or limitation of traffic through them were ways in which the built environment of the shrine exerted control over pilgrims' bodies and experience.⁹

Let us begin by walking alongside a pilgrim visiting St. Symeon's shrine in the early sixth century. In order to reach the lofty goals of venerating the styleite's column and participating in the liturgical rituals in the eastern basilican arm, we set out from the village of Telanissos (modern Deir Sem'an) where we

would have received shelter and refreshment in the plain below the saint's shrine (Figure 10.1).¹⁰ A paved road, or sacred way, lined with shops and lodging leads northeast from the village up the hillside. Recent archaeological investigation of the structures flanking the road illuminate the planned, coherent, and commercial nature of these structures. They are, as the excavation report notes, "exceptionally standardized" with contiguous structures of simple, single-chamber units comparable in scale and arrangement.¹¹ The spatial organization together with numismatic evidence of over 900 bronze coins recovered from multiple occupation levels of the two most extensively excavated structures suggest a tremendously active commercial zone.¹²

Before the sanctuary itself comes into view, spanning the road where the landscape begins a more precipitous ascent, a freestanding arch interrupts our climb at about the halfway point between village and shrine and apparently marked the end of this zone of commercial development (Figure 10.2).¹³ Together with the paved roadway from Telanissos, the arch formalized and fixed the relatively short (less than 1 km) journey up the mountainside into a single, dominant route. As pilgrims followed the sacred way leaving the village they may have imagined that they were tracing the saint's own ascetic journey from the social and natural world found at Telanissos up to the mountaintop where Symeon confined himself behind a stone



Figure 10.2 Qal'at Sem'an, "Triumphal" Arch from the south, end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century.

Photo: Ann Marie Yasin.

enclosure wall.¹⁴ The paved route and its arch at once valorizes this illusion (in essence declaring, “This is the way”) while simultaneously converting the undeveloped mountaintop into an impressive, architecturally structured landscape and recasting Symeon’s ascetic flight from human company into a collective, socially ritualized processional route.

The arch itself, thought to date to the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century,¹⁵ formally aggrandizes the route with Corinthian columns on two stories adorning the flanks of the screen-like passageway.¹⁶ With its imposing, classicizing architecture, the Qal’at Sem’an arch declared the monumental pretensions of the place in a language appropriated directly from imperial and civic magnificence. In the Roman provinces, such monumental arches are most often found in or at the edges of urban centers (e.g. Hadrian’s Arch situated outside the South Gate at Jerash and the Triumphal Arch at the east end of Bosra’s *decumanus maximus*).¹⁷ A smaller group, identified by A.L. Frothingham as “territorial arches,” were located at administrative edges, marking provincial boundaries.¹⁸ Here at Qal’at Sem’an, though, we must remember we are in the rural limestone massif of northwest Syria, far from the trappings of urban life. Spanning the route from village to shrine, the archway imparted a topographic grandeur and foreshadowed the architectonic scale of the ecclesiastical complex ahead.

And it apparently marked a boundary of sorts too. Recent excavations have begun to expose the remains of two structures situated just after the arch on the uphill side from Telanissos/Deir Sem’an – one directly against its south and eastern side (VS 01) and the other a slight distance away to the northeast (VS 02).¹⁹ These buildings each have elaborate facades with large windows underscored by decorated parapet blocks on either side of a central entrance.²⁰ Inside both structures, an entrance chamber with benches opens to a series of rooms in which a remarkable quantity and variety of finds have been recovered, including oil lamps, coins, scales and weights, jewelry, and over 45 locally made pilgrims’ tokens.²¹ Based on the scale, arrangement, and especially the striking quantity and character of small finds, the excavators tentatively identify VS 01 and VS 02 as office structures just inside the monumental Triumphal Arch, serving perhaps as places to welcome, channel, and register pilgrims as well as to distribute souvenirs of their visit to the shrine.²² The arch may, in other words, have served as a kind of sacro-bureaucratic territorial boundary marking the place of formal inscription of visitors and transition into the territory of the shrine from the village. Regardless of this potentially official role, the arch most certainly visually and symbolically punctuated the route with a monumental dramatization of the shift from settlement and plain to the more spiritual and topographic heights of the saint’s shrine.

In signaling and monumentalizing the visitors’ spatial and sacred transition, the Triumphal Arch also foreshadowed subsequent boundary-marking architectural features further along the travelers’ path. Beyond the so-called Triumphal Arch, the road begins a steeper ascent up the slope to the north to the perimeter wall of the ecclesiastical complex itself (Figure 10.1). Here we meet another juncture as the sacred way ushers us to the monumental gate that forms the main entrance of the shrine proper, likely understood by visitors as the enclosure (*mandra*) that

figures prominently in the saint's biographies.²³ Constructed in the late fifth century as a triple-arched entrance, the two side-passageways were walled up in the mid seventh century and then further masked by two towers added in the tenth-century fortification of the site (Figure 10.3).²⁴ Originally, however, each opening stretched nearly 3 m wide by 4.5 m high and was adorned on its exterior faces by platband decorative moldings.²⁵ On the opposite side, the three passages of the monumental entrance were echoed once again with the triple openings of an arcade on the interior. As the so-called Triumphal Arch had adopted an architectonic scale and form that echoed earlier imperial arches, so the enclosure gate at Qal'at Sem'an evoked grand civic entrances. The gate and arcade's triple arches adopt a shape familiar from earlier imperial municipal gates with three entrances, such as the Domitian Gate at Hierapolis or Hadrian's Gate at Antalya.²⁶ Moreover at Qal'at Sem'an, the space between the archway and the arcade was covered creating a platform above.²⁷ For visitors at ground-level, proceeding through the monumental covered entrance would have somatically emphasized the transition, not dissimilar to the barrel-vaulted passage through a city gate, as one passed through the darkened enclosed passageway before emerging on the other side into the broad courtyard.

These triple-arch openings at Qal'at Sem'an also oriented pilgrims' attention further down their route as they presaged the three broad archways that formed



Figure 10.3 Qal'at Sem'an, triple-arch gate of enclosure wall gate from the south, late fifth century (two side arches walled up mid seventh century; towers added tenth century).

Photo: Ann Marie Yasin.

the monumental entrance on the south side of the church itself. The architecture of the precinct gate, which formed the threshold of the sanctuary as a whole, thus materialized a kind of “preamble” or foreshadowing of the church building’s main entrance. Together they created a spatial and experiential pattern that structured pilgrims’ progression through the site as they visually witnessed and bodily negotiated the repeated architectonic forms.

The two sets of the triple-arched passages – through the enclosure wall and at the church threshold – also marked points of regulation, control, and selectivity over who would be granted access to the spaces beyond. The precinct boundary gate could be closed against the unwelcome and was, as we have seen, already increasingly physically restricted by the seventh century. The entrance to the southern basilica arm of the church also apparently monumentalized a threshold that certain pilgrims, namely women, were not permitted to cross. According to Evagrius Scholasticus’s description of the miraculous appearance of a star visible from the shrine on saint’s feast day on September 1,

... on coming to the place, men gain entry without restriction . . . but for whatever reason I cannot say there is a most strict watch so that no woman should visit the interior of the sanctuary. The women stand outside near the doorway and admire and wonder, for one of the doors is situated opposite the gleaming star.²⁸

Altogether these elements – the fixed processional route, the monumental arch, the precinct gate, and the church entrance – fashioned a formal, highly structured experience. They physically, visually, and symbolically tethered the village and plain to the shrine above while at the same time introducing unavoidable junctures, pauses, and boundaries, the crossing of which marked admission into increasingly sacred and restricted space.

As an architectural strategy, such formally arch-punctuated processional routes were of course not invented for Christian contexts. Indeed, they feature prominently along the *viae sacrae* of several important Roman sanctuaries. One might think most obviously of the triumphal route in Rome with the sacred way leading to the Capitoline aggrandized and framed by the sculpture- and inscription-bedecked honorific arches erected by the Senate along its route.²⁹ Still closer parallels can be found in elevated sanctuaries such as the Sanctuary of Hercules in the acropolis above Amman (ancient Philadelphia) and at the Sanctuary of Zeus on Mt. Gerizim above Neapolis/Nablus (mod. Shechem) where city and mountaintop shrine were in both cases linked by precipitous stairways punctuated at either end by monumental gates.³⁰ Or we might compare the use of monumental propylea to bracket the processional route between Athens and Eleusis in the Roman period.³¹ Roman-era gateway structures at either end of the Eleusinian sacred way welcomed initiates and devotees and denied entrance to the unworthy. As Margaret Miles and others have argued, the paired propyla supplied blatant visual linkages between center and periphery conjuring up veritable 3-D replicas from the two ends of the processional route.³² The “Greater” Propylaia at Eleusis begun almost certainly by

Hadrian and completed under Marcus Aurelius is a direct copy of the fifth-century Propylaia to the Acropolis in the heart of Athens. At the same time, at the urban end of the processional road, a new propylon was added to the City Eleusinion. It adopted caryatids and likely also a frieze of recognizably Eleusinian cultic objects in direct emulation of the so-called “Lesser” Propylon that had been set up out at Eleusis by Appius Claudius Pulcher some two centuries earlier. The calculated use of such monumental gateways along the processional routes of these and other Greco-Roman sanctuaries heightened pilgrims’ experience of their progression and their access to the sacred. They also constructed palpable visual resonances along the route, often most markedly between sites of departure and arrival.

Scholars have generally tended not to examine Christian sites against this broader Greco-Roman sacro-spatial pattern. Qal‘at Sem‘an’s use of monumental arch passages and reduplicated entranceways are not, however, unique in comparison either to earlier pagan sanctuaries or to contemporary Christian shrines. In fact several Christian pilgrimage sites with ostensibly humble origins were elaborated over the course of the late antique period with monumental arches, gateways, and formalized avenues of approach that served similar functions and created similar effects to those seen at Amman, Eleusis, and elsewhere.

This is certainly the case at Abu Mena, the major pilgrimage center and settlement that grew up around the tomb of St. Menas southwest of Alexandria. In its most monumental phase in the sixth to early seventh century, with the construction of the Justinianic iteration of the “Martyr (or Tomb) Church” and the subsequent Byzantine defensive walls, the pilgrim’s route to the shrine took the form of a broad colonnaded street slicing through residential areas to carry visitors directly from the edge of town to the saint’s shrine at its core (Figure 10.4). As the excavator Peter Grossmann pointedly observes, the street became narrower as it reached the shrine, “in an apparently deliberate architectural plan – to raise the tension of the pilgrims arriving for the first time.”³³

It is also important to observe that at each end as well as at a critical midway juncture, monumental triple archways spanned this street. At the road’s start, a triple-passage monumental gate greeted pilgrims approaching from the northern route that led from Alexandria, though little remains of this gate except the articulation of the central passageway (Figure 10.4).³⁴ Within the walls, the point where the street narrows most sharply and turns directly to the south was heralded by a triple-archway spanning the newly constricted road (one pedestal of which was found *in situ*).³⁵ And yet further ahead, at the opposite end of this strait-away, a third triple-archway announced the entrance to the main courtyard preceding the church (the so-called “Pilgrims’ Court”). Thus the highly formalized, monumental road that escorted visitors to the saint’s shrine, past houses, bath complexes, and shops, also marshaled them through three distinct iterations of a triple-arched passageway. Each of these structures both reframed visitors’ visual horizons and interrupted their kinetic progress by commanding their attention and forcing them to negotiate one of the three narrow passageways inserted into the thoroughfare. Furthermore, the archways had the effect of both unifying the route as a whole and creating rhythmic, repeated architectural articulations at significant moments of

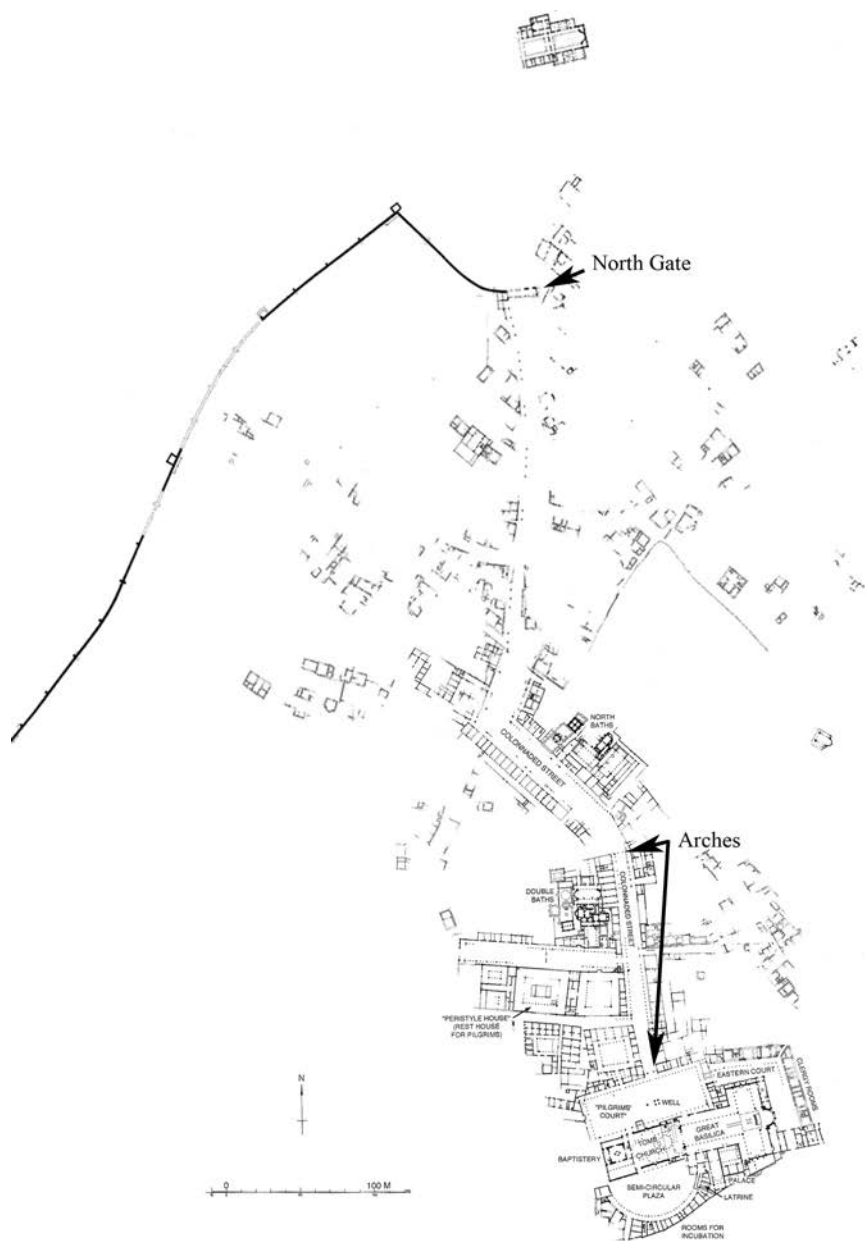


Figure 10.4 Abu Mena, plan of St. Menas pilgrimage complex and town to the north with arrows indicating archways (after McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*, p. 292, fig. 485 and Grossmann, “Abū Mīna. 13.,” fig. 2).

juncture and passage: at the boundary of the cityscape, at the moment of increased physical constriction and emotional frisson where the shrine first comes into view, and at the threshold of the court before the shrine itself.

The landscape surrounding the stupendously well-preserved, still functioning church at St. Catherine's monastery built in the mid sixth century offers a compelling comparison. The church memorializes the site in the South Sinai Peninsula where God spoke to Moses through the Burning Bush at the base of the mountain where Moses is said to have received the tablets of the Law (Mount Moses, or Jebel Musa). Here multiple architectural, epigraphic, and decorative strategies work in concert to punctuate the pilgrims' journey and to layer in spiritual and observable connections across the landscape. The two most significant thresholds of the monastery complex, for example, are surmounted by the letters of the same verse of psalms. Over the now-walled-up gate that originally served as the main entrance through the Justinianic walls of the monastery an appropriate quote from Psalm 118:20 reads, "This is the gate of the Lord: the righteous shall pass through it. . . ." ³⁶ The very same words remain clearly legible at the threshold of the church, carved deeply into the sixth-century wooden lintel across the central entrance from the narthex. ³⁷ The two architectural boundaries of monastery and church were brought into immediate comparison by their declaration of the same threshold-invoking biblical passage. Together the repetitious passageways shaped a spatial and verbal rhythm that punctuated one's transition from the desert into the monastic enclosure, and thence to the liturgical space of the church and the sacred site of the burning bush behind.

Within the church, magnificently preserved sixth-century mosaics adorning the Triumphal Arch over the sanctuary include two prominent and spatially charged episodes of the Moses legend. On the left side of the arch, the prophet is shown amid a rocky landscape bending down to loosen his sandal as he gazes toward the hand of God emerging from the heavens directly above the flaming bush. This is no mere stock biblical illustration, for the miracle it depicts was held to have occurred on the very place where the church was constructed. Late antique and modern pilgrims alike who gaze upon this image would have traversed the rugged landscape to stand upon the very stones depicted in the image beneath Moses's feet. Turning their attention to the pendant image on the right, however, viewers are visually transported from the site of the Burning Bush to the mountaintop where Moses receives with veiled outstretched arms the inscribed tablets of the Law directly from the Hand of God. Significantly, from the monastic church located in a wadi valley surrounded by the forbidding mountainous desert terrain it is not possible to see Mount Moses itself or that of another nearby holy summit, Jebel Sufsa, identified in the Byzantine period as Mount Horeb, the mountain to which Elijah fled. Yet despite the absence of a direct line of sight, two of the essential points of a pilgrim's journey, sacred bush and mountain summit, are here within the church brought together for simultaneous viewing as sequential episodes of a single sacred narrative of divine intervention. ³⁸ The juxtaposition of locales depicted in the church's Triumphal Arch mosaics crafts a visual and conceptual link between the two local sites associated with Moses's encounters with God.

Across the South Sinai mountainscape, other features extended and substantiated the visual message of the church mosaics. A network of formally prepared paths whose steps, cut-stone pavers, drainage features, and retaining walls, which in many places still remain visible, structured pilgrims' routes of movement and articulated observable connections between the two sacred sites pictured in the church mosaics as well as with the smaller monasteries and hermitages encountered along the pilgrims' journey.³⁹

Archaeological survey of this network of mountainside routes has also revealed some two dozen small, freestanding niches dotting the landscape surrounding St. Catherine's, including 14 along the paths inscribed across Jebel Sufsa (Figure 10.5).⁴⁰ These simple, horseshoe- or pi-shaped stone-built structures, which Israel Finkelstein called "prayer niches," faced east and were apparently only about waist high, originally standing at most a meter tall.⁴¹ They were also narrow, averaging just 2 x 2.5 m, and would have allowed only one or two people to enter at a time. Stepping into one of the so-called prayer niches would thus have shaped a personal, intimate interaction with the landscape as one's movement was temporarily arrested and one's gaze directed over the waist-high barrier toward the mountain vista to the east.

Given this, the most remarkable aspect of the freestanding niches is their location, for many of them appear to have been positioned so as to direct viewers to particularly significant vistas. There are niches along the major pathway of the *Sikket Shu'eib* (the Path of Jethro), for example, positioned at points where descending travelers would first be able to view the valley that connected to St. Catherine's Monastery (no. 2 on Figure 10.5) and where those climbing up would catch the first direct look at the peak of Mount Moses (no. 3 on Figure 10.5).⁴² Further up the path, a cluster of five other niches present additional dramatic views of Mount Moses to those who stop there (nos. 7–11 on Figure 10.5).⁴³ These sight-line-focusing niches, humble though they are as structures, performed several substantive roles. They punctuated the trek by inviting travelers to pause and recognize the newly visible holy places, especially the peak of Jebel Musa itself, where God was believed to have handed Moses the tablets of the Law and where a second church, contemporary with the Justinianic basilica in the monastery in the valley below, stood.⁴⁴ Doing so, the niches structured climbers' experience of the otherwise bewildering mountainous terrain by drawing attention to distances and conceptual relationships between holy places. Sinai's prepared pathways and their attention-grabbing built features thus comprise the means of accessing mountaintop holy places, making sense of relationships between sacro-historical sites, and comprehending one's own place and progress (both physical and spiritual) within the broader numinous landscape.

In addition to the modest pause- and vista-inducing niches, there were also substantial architectural passageways inserted along the travelers' course. The main route taken today into the mountains from St. Catherine's Monastery, the so-called "Path of Steps" (or "*Sikket Syedna Musa*"), follows the principal medieval and apparently early Byzantine ascent to the peak consisting of some 3000 steps (see Figure 10.5).⁴⁵ At two points along it climbers must pass through narrow arches, the so-called "St. Stephen's Gate" (Figure 10.6) and the "Upper Gate." Both are

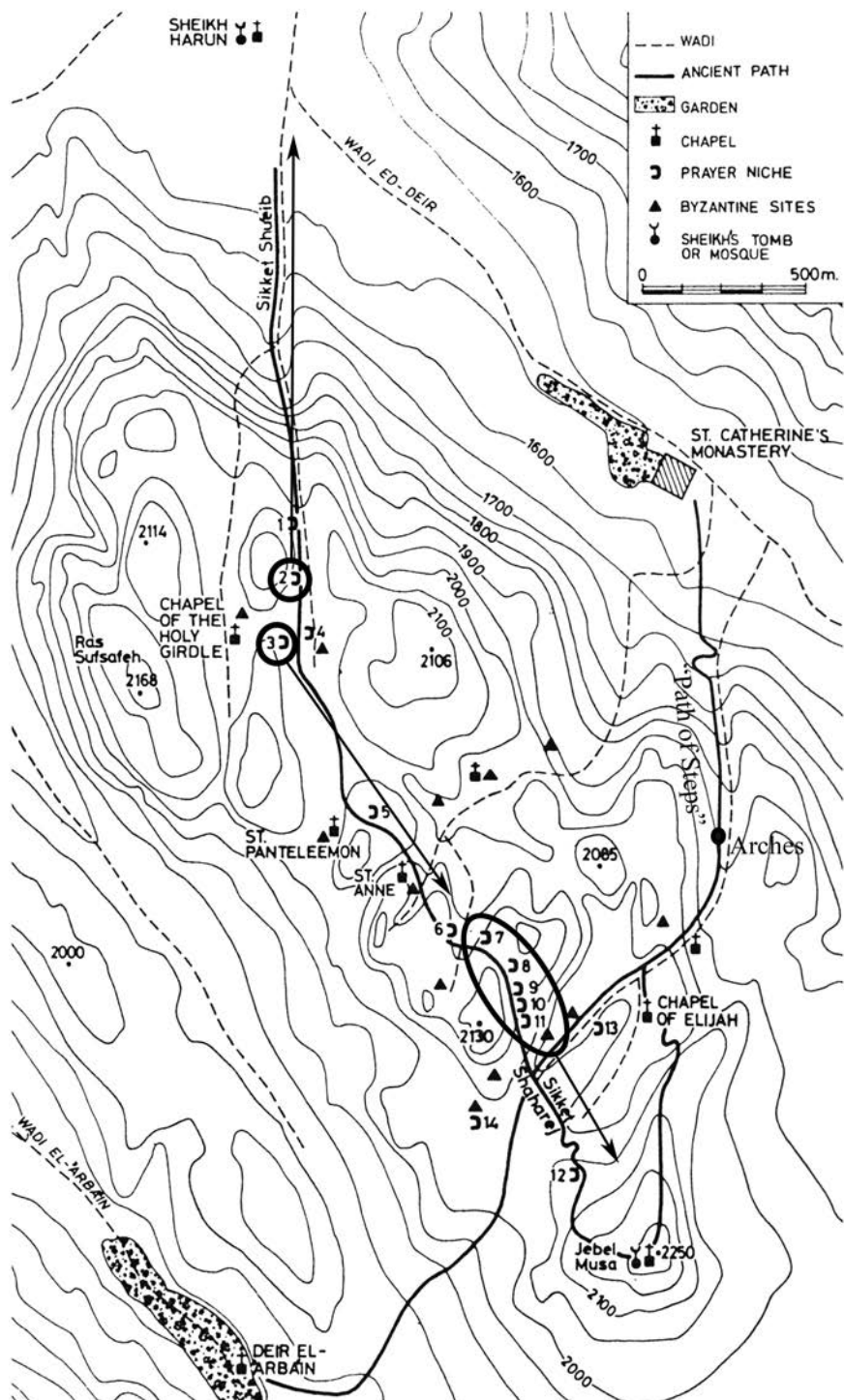




Figure 10.6 Sinai, “St. Stephen’s Gate” and the so-called “Path of Steps” leading from the Monastery of St. Catherine to the peak of Jebel Musa.

Photo: Ann Marie Yasin.

believed to date to the sixth or seventh century and both were originally inscribed, though only that on the second arch – a prayer for the salvation of one Father John, monastery abbot – is legible.⁴⁶ These two monumentalized passageways declare the significance of the dominant route up the slope, create a sequence of interruptions on the ascent, and serve as conceptual milestones punctuating the pilgrims’ movement into increasingly steep terrain. The strategy of introducing a series of

visually and architecturally parallel thoroughways along the travelers' path is analogous to that which we have seen at Qal'at Sem'an and Abu Mena.

Finally, at Tebessa (ancient Theveste) in eastern Algeria we find yet another variation of reduplicated passageway architecture along the approach to a major Christian shrine. In the heart of the Roman city, the Arch of Caracalla, erected in 214 CE, originally stood as a freestanding quadrifons monument aggrandizing the crossing of the *cardo* and *decumanus maximus* (Figures 10.7 and 10.8).⁴⁷ By the second quarter of the sixth century, when the now-smaller town was furnished with a new defensive circuit,⁴⁸ the Arch was incorporated into the enceinte and served as the main gate of the city on its northeast face. From here, the extension of the *cardo* that headed to the city of Haidra (Ammaedara) led directly to the so-called "Christian quarter," an impressive walled precinct enclosing a basilica with a vast porticoed garden and triconch martyrs' shrine, possibly of the famous local martyr St. Crispina (Figure 10.9).⁴⁹ The principal entrance to the extramural church precinct at the time of its elaboration in the late fourth/early fifth century was via a huge arched gateway flanking the Theveste-Ammaedara highway. Remarkably, the gate directly echoed the early third-century imperial arch originally built in the city center. At the entrance to the martyr's shrine, freestanding Corinthian columns on tall podia flank a single, approximately 11 m high opening and support a wide



Figure 10.7 Tebessa, Arch of Caracalla.

Photo: Gianni Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

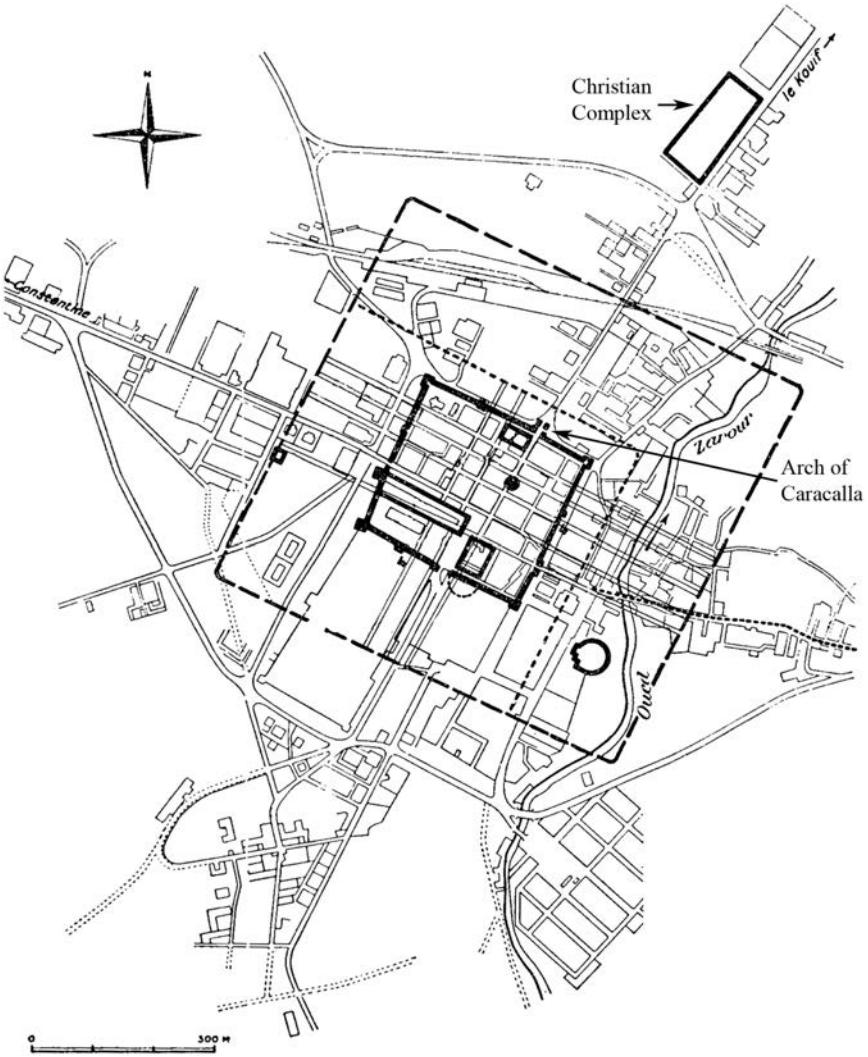


Figure 10.8 Tebessa, plan of city with Arch of Caracalla and Christian pilgrimage center (of St. Crispina?) labeled (after Christern, *Frühchristliche Pilgerheiligtum*, p. 21, fig. 7).

attic story.⁵⁰ Jürgen Christern, the author of a monograph on the Christian complex at Tebessa, is surely correct when he suggests, based on the close formal similarity between the facades of the two arches as well as their nearly equal dimensions, that the Christian arch was intentionally modeled on the north face of the Arch of Caracalla.⁵¹ The construction of the Christian complex, in other words, blatantly

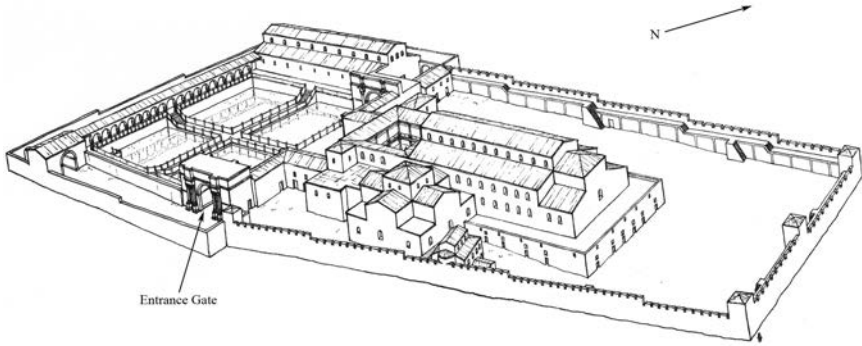


Figure 10.9 Tebessa, reconstruction of elevation of the Christian pilgrimage center (after Christern, *Frühchristliche Pilgerheiligtum*, fig. 23b).

adopted the appearance and scale of the Roman arch to magnify and punctuate its own precinct entrance. In doing so it also appropriated the pre-existing urban arch itself, transforming the at least 200-year-old structure from an honorific memorial erected to articulate the armatures of the inner-city grid into one half of a paired set that pointed out of town, leading locals and visitors directly to the Christian martyrs' shrine (see Figure 10.8). The Arch of Caracalla was thus pressed into service to contribute architectural unity to the processional route from city boundary to extramural sanctuary.

The construction campaigns at each of the Christian sites we have examined illustrate monumental responses to the explosion of cults of saints and religious pilgrimage in the fifth and sixth centuries. More, bigger, and increasingly elaborate sanctuaries were built to accommodate Christians' heightened demand for personal encounters and the direct witnessing of places where sacred remains were housed or events had transpired. Yet, it is also important to acknowledge that such a functionalist explanation on its own fails to account for the visual, somatic, and even spiritual effects of such features on late antique visitors. In each of our cases, monumental arches and entryways erected at multiple liminal junctures established a rhythmic pattern as visitors progressed through urban, extra-urban, or rural landscapes toward the church that sheltered the goal of their pilgrimage. Though the forms of the arches and entrances at Qal'at Sem'an, Sinai, Abu Mena, and Tebessa differ, these major pilgrimage sites shared common spatial and architectural strategies: each featured multiple iterations of monumental passage architecture along the main access route to the shrine. These gates and arches served as visual landmarks against which pilgrims could conceptually measure their progress. They delimited a single, dominant path to the holy, facilitating while at the same time setting limits on movement. They created both transitions and linkages along the visitors' path to the holy from town or village to sacred center. They negotiated built

and symbolic boundaries as well as shifts in landscape and elevation, and they dramatized the route by funneling and controlling traffic flow, offering formal moments of framed and restricted vision, and drawing increased attention to the very action of passage itself.

Notes

For my fruitful and stimulating visits to the Sinai Peninsula and the Syrian limestone massif before the outbreak of ongoing unrest in Egypt and Syria, I am terrifically grateful to Kristen Collins, Cecily Hilsdale, Galina Tirnanic, Father Justin Sinaïtes and the other Holy Fathers of St. Catherine's Monastery, Dina Boero, Widad Khoury, Ihsan Ishaq and the support of faculty development grants from the University of Southern California. My thanks also for valuable questions and feedback on this work from Danny Richter, Troels Myrup Kristensen, Wiebke Frieze, participants of the Aarhus conference and the anonymous reviewer.

- 1 Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 26.12. All three versions of the saint's *vita*—Theodoret's and one by a certain Antonius in Greek, and the longer, anonymous Syriac *Life*—describe Symeon occupying increasingly tall pillars as his asceticism intensified, though they differ slightly on the absolute measurements. The remains of the one at the center of the cruciform church is the last and tallest of those the saint is said to have occupied in his lifetime. See Doran 1992, 17; Schachner 2010, 337–342; Stang 2010, 447–470.
- 2 Fernandez 1985, 117–152; Pentcheva 2010, 17–44; Schachner 2010, esp. 370–375; Sodini 1989, 29–53; Vikan 2010, 31–33, 53–56, 73–75.
- 3 On the longer local tradition of pillar symbolism reaching backwards as well as forwards from Symeon, see especially Frankfurter 1990; Schachner 2010; Stang 2010.
- 4 Other token types depict the saint atop his column flanked by New Testament scenes, the column with or without the saint, or the saint without the column: in addition to the sources listed in n. 2 above, see Sodini 1993; Sodini, Blanc and Pieri 2011.
- 5 Sodini 2001; 2007; see also Yasin 2012, 248–280, and Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 6 MacDonald 1986, 75.
- 7 Articulated in Turner 1973 and later Turner and Turner 1978, esp. 1–38.
- 8 Turner and Turner 1978, 23.
- 9 As Coleman and Elsner write in the conclusion of their cross-cultural pilgrimage study, “[pilgrims’] movements, and therefore their physical orientations in space, are frequently prescribed in ways which encourage outward conformity to religious norms” (Coleman and Elsner 1995, 209).
- 10 In addition to the accommodations in Deir Sem’an, new exploration has identified a large thermal complex north of the village apparently in use from the sixth through eighth centuries: Biscop 2009, esp. 1432–1434.
- 11 *Ibid.*, esp. 1397 and 1403.
- 12 Biscop 2009.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 1407. The arch is *ca.* 400 m from both village and sanctuary: Pieri 2009, 1394 and fig. 1, p. 1395.
- 14 Theodoret, *HR* 26.10; Antonius's *Life* 12; Syriac *Life* 28 (Doran, *Lives of Simeon* 74, 92, 118).
- 15 Pieri 2009, 1394.
- 16 This structure has received remarkably little scholarly attention – it has neither been archeologically probed or architecturally surveyed and many factual details must at this point remain unknown, including the appearance of its attic story (along with any inscription it may have supported).
- 17 For a survey of gates and gate-like structures in the eastern empire, see Bührig 2006, 131–152; Segal 1997, 129–140.

- 18 Frothingham 1915, 155–174.
- 19 Pieri 2009, esp. 1407–1420. Approximately 10 meters separate the buildings, the second of which stood directly on axis with the archway (*Ibid.*, 1407).
- 20 *Ibid.*, 1409.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 1414–1417; Sodini, Blanc and Pieri 2011.
- 22 Biscop 2009; Pieri 2009; Sodini and Biscop 2011, 11–59; Sodini *et al.* 2002, 345–357; and the ifpo wiki on the recent excavations: “Saint-Syméon / Qalaat Semaan: L’arc triomphal et les bâtiments attenants”: http://wikis.ifpoorient.org/archeologie/index.php/Saint-Syméon/_/Qalaat_Semaan (accessed Dec. 29, 2014). Vicky Foskolou (2012) argues that the tokens were given away rather than sold to pilgrims at Qal‘at Sem‘an and other early Byzantine shrines: esp. 60–62.
- 23 While Symeon’s mountaintop enclosure is a conspicuous feature of each of the three versions of his biography, in the Syriac *vita* it plays an especially prominent role in defining the boundaries of and limitations to petitioners’ access (e.g. Syriac *Life* 33) and visually demarking the saint’s accessibility (as when closed during Lent, e.g. Syriac *Life* 60 and 113, or periods of self-imposed solitary confinement, e.g. Syriac *Life* 93–101) and his miracles (e.g. Syriac *Life* 63). Cf. Michel Kaplan’s study of the *mandra* in the biographies of Daniel and later stylite saints: Kaplan 2001.
- 24 The fifth-century construction date for the monumental entrance is attested by ceramic and numismatic finds, and the seventh-century date of walling up is attested by pottery finds: Sodini 1995, 348; Sodini and Biscop 2011, 23.
- 25 Biscop and Sodini 1989, 1690.
- 26 More commonly triple-passageway gates had a larger central opening flanked by two smaller ones (Segal 1997, 94–101; Jacobs 2009, 200). Jacobs also cites additional examples of gates at Christian complexes that consciously reference triumphal arches (*Ibid.*, 201).
- 27 Biscop and Sodini 1989, 1693; Sodini 2001, 348; 2007, 111.
- 28 *Ecc. Hist.* I, 14; translation: Whitby 2000, 40–41. Cf. passages from the saint’s *vita* cited above, n. 23.
- 29 Favro 1994; De Maria 1988.
- 30 The Hercules Sanctuary at Amman, dating to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, was installed within the Hellenistic fortifications on the Acropolis: Bowsher 1992, 129–137; Kanellopoulos 1994; Segal 2013, 259–265. The Sanctuary and Temple of Zeus on the Mt. Gerizim tell was connected to Nablus by a stairway starting from a propylon attested in numismatic sources and reported in late antique accounts to have been made up of at least 1300 steps: Magen 1993, 488–491; Segal 2013, 255–258; see also Segal 1997, 118–119.
- 31 See Nielsen, this volume.
- 32 Miles 2012; Palinkas 2008.
- 33 Grossmann 1998, 287. See also Grossmann 2002, 401–409; McKenzie 2007, 288–295; and Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 34 Grossmann 1991, 465–467; 1995, 389–423.
- 35 Grossmann *et al.* 1984, 147–148, pl. 9a.
- 36 Ševčenko 1966, 262, no. 1; Coleman and Elsner 1994, 78–79; Caner 2010, 25.
- 37 Ševčenko 1966, 262, no. 2.2; Coleman and Elsner 1994; Elsner and Wolf 2010, 50.
- 38 Weitzman 1973, 15; elaborated by Elsner 1994, 86–87. See also Coleman and Elsner 1995, 210–211; Elsner and Wolf 2010, 52–55; Nelson 2006, 15.
- 39 Dahari 2000, 47–48; Finkelstein and Ovadiah 1985, 56.
- 40 Finkelstein 1981.
- 41 Though many preserve only one or two of their courses, several are preserved to their original height with carefully leveled top courses standing 0.75–1 m from the ground (Finkelstein 1981, 81).
- 42 Finkelstein 1981, 84. See also Coleman and Elsner 1994, 78; 1995, 211.
- 43 Finkelstein 1981, 85.

- 44 Kalopissi-Verti and Panayotidi 2010.
- 45 Dahari 2000, 47; Finkelstein 1985, 56.
- 46 Dahari 2000; Ševčenko 1966, 257, 263 (insc. no. 11).
- 47 Christern 1976, 22.
- 48 Dated shortly after 530 based on an inscription by the *magister militum* Solomon (Christern 1976, 22).
- 49 *Ibid.*; Yasin 2009, 161–164.
- 50 Christern 1976, 40, n. 38.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 40. See also Jacobs 2009, 202, 206 and 210, n. 40.

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11 Movement as sacred mimesis at Abu Mena and Qal'at Sem'an

Heather Hunter-Crawley

Experiencing the Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar

A hot day in May, 2013. I am in Amritsar, the heart of the Punjab, to visit the world's most sacred place for Sikhs, the Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple. I approach barefoot, along a red carpet laid out on the hot, dusty ground to direct pilgrims and tourists from surrounding hotels to the main entrances of the enclosed complex. As we near the north-east gate, I draw up my *dupatta*; a covered head is a prerequisite for entry for both women and men. Large buckets contain an array of headscarves to accommodate fellow non-Sikh visitors. At the top of the steps, people cluster around taps and basins to conduct ablutions before entering. The threshold is marked by a shallow foot bath, across which I find myself at the top of carpeted stairs, where many people are pausing by the brass handrails to take in the view. The temple, framed by marble arches in front of me, glimmers and sparkles in the centre of the 'pool of nectar', a shallow, pale blue lake. On all four sides white marble edifices gleam in the late morning sun. There is a colourful hum and bustle of people circulating the rectangular lake to the sounds of the *Adi Granth* chanted from four loudspeakers.

I join the throng in a clockwise direction, my feet scorched as I cross the hot marble floor to the walkway; the heat impels our movement. There is no strict routine to follow that I can discern. Each pilgrim fulfils independent goals as they wish. Men bathe on the steps down to the pool. Respects are paid to the sacred objects that line the walkway. Rupees are offered. Photographs are taken. The volunteers who maintain the temple go about their chores: sweeping, polishing, transporting laundry. All the while the temple shimmers in the centre of the pool, anchored to the rest of the complex by a covered causeway that ferries shuffling crowds back and forth to the home of the sacred scripture (Figure 11.1).

From the south-east come the aromas of a kitchen complex, where volunteers are rolling out *chapattis* by the thousand, and rice and *daal* bubble in enormous cauldrons, preparing the simple *langar* meal which is free to all visiting the *Gurdwara*. Every day it is spooned out onto metal *thali* for the tens of thousands seated on the long mats that line the canteen. Trays are deposited with the pot washers at the exit, the water running down the steps creating lines of wet footprints back to the lake.



Figure 11.1 The Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, India. View of the Golden Temple from the South. Author's photograph.

I continue round to the more shaded north-west side, where a golden gateway marks the beginning of the queue across the causeway to the temple. I am advised that the line, intersected by brass railings, is gender segregated, and am directed to the right hand side. In fact, there is an even mix of genders and people of all ages on both sides, mostly clustered in family groups. The wait is slow, shuffling, and quiet, whether out of anticipation or respect I do not know. Though the walkway is shaded, the air is hot and sticky, and we are pressed quite closely together by the narrow space. Older people, men in particular, progress more quickly through the throng, elbowing incrementally forward through the gaps, younger people respectfully shifting to allow them past.

Eventually, we re-emerge into brilliant sunlight, with a full view of the shining temple now immediately in front of us. The intricacy of the decoration is now revealed, not just golden, but highly patterned. The exterior lower section is bright marble, inlaid with colourful birds and vegetation. The windowless interior is over-poweringly ornate; every shining and colourful surface is covered in delicate scrolling patterns, and even the gently whirring ceiling fans are golden. Guards flank the threshold, where people pause to bow before entering; I stall the queue to allow the woman in front of me to complete the action, and she thanks me. Inside, a small congregation sits respectfully on the floor to listen to an original copy of the *Adi Granth* being chanted from its canopied stand, while an attendant waves a *chaur* over it. Passing through to the rear of the temple I climb a marble staircase to

the balcony above, where a few people sit peacefully studying their own copies of the holy scripture. Up a further flight of stairs is the rooftop, which reveals a glorious view of the entire complex. Some take a moment to appreciate the panorama, but the attention of the majority is directed inwards, towards the sounds and sights of original copies of the *Adi Granth* in all their splendour.

Returning in the evening, the atmosphere is still and peaceful. The movement around the complex has slowed, and there is a gentle buzz of conversation against the backdrop of singing and chanting, creating a relaxed, festive feel. Dispersed around the complex, groups of family and friends either lie down to sleep or sit and chat, meeting fellow visitors and pilgrims: sharing stories and photographs; learning about new places, while guards in navy and yellow patrol the walkway. The pool is dark now, but the temple is more bright and golden than ever, lit up on all sides and reflected in the water, which is disturbed only by the surfacing of koi carp. The queue across the causeway dissipates as a small crowd gathers to witness the final rituals of the day. While the sacred books are ceremoniously removed for the night an army of volunteers sets to sweeping the path and polishing the railings, ready to receive thousands more again tomorrow.

This phenomenological account describes an experience of a modern-day pilgrimage site. As a non-Sikh, my understanding of Sikhism and the religious significance of the Harmandir Sahib is very limited, and in all probability flawed. Nonetheless, it would be a very difficult task to appreciate the powerful impressions the Harmandir Sahib makes on visitors if my understanding was restricted to empirical descriptions of the architectural layout. As archaeologists, we share a similar barrier in making sense of ancient pilgrimage sites from which we are both culturally and chronologically removed, compounded by the absence of pilgrims to talk to about their experiences. As a result, we may focus our attention on the macro-level of pilgrimage, the structures and their wider social and geographical context. Yet it is precisely at the micro-level of phenomenological experience that the meaning of pilgrimage is constructed, as bodies move through space. How individuals move around a site, how they interact with each other and with their immediate environment, the sounds, sights, smells, and other sensations which they experience, all of these elements combine to constitute the memory and the meaning of a pilgrimage at the level of both individual and community. It is through the experiences of pilgrims that narratives of pilgrimage are constructed, narratives which define and incite acts of pilgrimage for others. My visit was not religiously motivated, but it was an experience which constructed a meaning of a sacred site nonetheless, and all pilgrimage is grounded in this first-person perspective. In order to appreciate the impact and fuller meaning of ancient pilgrimages we need to consider the architectural and material evidence of the sites from the first-person perspective of bodies moving through space.

In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which the archaeological remains of two important late antique pilgrimage sites are able to offer insights into the phenomenological experience of ancient pilgrims. I will argue that the sites themselves prescribed the movement of pilgrims in ways that enabled the construction of meanings and narratives through individual sensory experience. Like the

Harmandir Sahib, Abu Mena and Qal'at Sem'an were enclosed sites which obliged pilgrims to process in particular directions (up, down, and around) and through narrowing spaces (archways, or narrowing paths), prescribing behaviour, and concealing and then revealing their respective objects of pilgrimage in a way that incited anticipation, awe, and respect. Also like the Harmandir Sahib, these sites were architecturally enhanced for the sake of pilgrimage, and for the purpose of focussing attention upon a central object of worship. While acknowledging that there are significant differences between cultures and phenomenologies, ancient and modern, Christian and Sikh, nonetheless I hope to show that exploring historical practices from a sensory and comparative perspective reveals a new understanding of late antique pilgrimage in which movement and experience served to replicate saintly actions.

Abu Mena and intimacy

The cult of Saint Menas was perhaps the most popular in all of late antique Egypt. Its centre, Abu Mena, housed the saint's tomb and attracted pilgrims from the local area, but also from further abroad, who were visiting the many *loca sancta* of the Holy Land. It was renowned for the saint's healing powers, and for its holy oil which pilgrims could collect in small flasks (Menas *ampullae*, Figure 11.2). The site declined in the seventh century, but its archaeological excavation has prompted Abu Mena's renaissance for Coptic pilgrims today (indeed, while the material evidence is abundant, there is no contemporary literary evidence for the late antique site). It is located c. 45km south-west from Alexandria in the Mareotis district, not far from Lake Mareotis, an important internal trade route in late antique Egypt. The area today is arid desert, but in Abu Mena's heyday (fourth to early seventh centuries), man-made irrigation channels created a more cultivated landscape which blossomed here and there with palm groves, farms, and small conurbations, oases in an otherwise dry and sandy place, the largest of which was Abu Mena itself.¹

From the perspective of an individual immersed in this environment, perhaps as a first-time or occasional visitor, the contrast between desert and oasis, or sand transformed into settlement, would be marked (indeed, the lack of water on the journey was a challenge for pilgrims). This is evident from the very long religious tradition surrounding Nile water's ability to transform Egyptian farmland from aridity to fertility. For example, in the Hellenistic period, *ampullae* very similar in design to the Menas *ampullae* were exchanged to celebrate the Egyptian New Year which was brought about by the Nile's inundation (such *ampullae* probably contained Nile water to commemorate the annual event).² Furthermore, since Saint Anthony had retired into rural Egypt, this environment carried with it another, Christianised notion of transformation, as monks and hermits flocked to the area to experience spiritual transformation through practices of asceticism (in parallel to Christ's 40 days in the desert). The transformative powers of water were also, of course, integral to Christian baptism, which was conducted at Abu Mena. Mareotis was thus infused with narratives of miraculous transformation, which were supported by the evidence of the visitor's own senses. In this context, Abu



Figure 11.2 Mena *ampulla*. $8.5 \times 6.9 \times 1.8$ cm. Earthenware. 7th century AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.194.2291. Author's photograph.

Mena, as a rich pilgrimage complex, would appear the largest of such miraculous transformations, the cause of which was the presence of the body of Saint Mena the martyr. By choosing an arid spot as his resting place (the camels transporting his body were compelled to stop in the middle of the desert by divine will), Mena transformed uninhabitable desert to miraculous, irrigated oasis. Revelation of this environmental transformation was available to those who travelled to the site and experienced it first-hand, coming away themselves transformed by it, through the ritual of pilgrimage.³

It is in the context of this transformation through liquid that I suggest the function of the Mena *ampullae* can be understood. The *ampullae* are usually embossed with an image of the saint, flanked by the camels which transported his body to its holy resting place (Figure 11.2). They range in diameter from c. 6–26 cm, and

in colour from pale beige to deep terracotta. Many of the images lack fineness and detail, meaning scholars did not identify the camels as such until relatively recently, and this has often been accounted for by the *ampullae*'s cheap mass manufacture.⁴ However, this 'rough' quality importantly creates certain sensory effects for the user. It makes the saint evasive to the eye; he is hard to pin down in focal detail, as if flitting in and out of peripheral view, and inspiring the sense of mystery and awe that was essential to the cult of saints and relics. A teasing promise to know what a holy person looks like is subverted by the image's imprecise execution, potentially reminding the viewer that divinity is ineffable, and that relics are just parts of more mysterious wholes. This effect does not need to have been intentionally designed into the *ampullae* in order to have been apparent to a user approaching the object as a relic.

I use the term 'relic' rather than 'reliquary' because the 'roughness' of the *ampullae* offers another experience to users, that of the dry desert environment of Mareotis itself. Whether or not the clay was actually from Abu Mena, its grainy, uneven texture and appearance has the power to evoke memories of that place. The very texture and colour of the clay captures a sandy, rocky, arid environment, just like Mareotis' natural state. The *ampullae* thus appear to be made of the site, in the same manner as earth or dust tokens from the Holy Sepulchre or Qal'at Sem'an. In this and other ways, the *ampullae* enabled users to re-live 'being there' at Abu Mena by crystallising snatches of the pilgrim's sensory experience. This occurred not just in the form of an inscribed vision of the saint's body, but also as the tactile qualities of the desert place of Abu Mena, which were re-livable through handling.

The *ampullae* also offered a means of re-living the site's process of transformation, through the joint activity of contents and container. No contents have survived, but chemical residue analysis of Menas *ampullae* from the Ashmolean has revealed lipids, and while it is possible that these are modern, this does offer some support to the assumption that the *ampullae* contained oil taken from a lamp in the tomb.⁵ Because the *ampullae* are mass-made, the lips are uneven and liable to chip, meaning that any liquid, when poured out, was likely to dribble or run down the exterior of the flask. The effect of this, as can be observed on any porous clay object, would be to transform the dry rough surface into shining smoothness, and to transform dry to shining wet colour, intensifying the richness of the clay's hue and making the saint's image gleam. In this way, *ampulla* as dry desert could be transformed into *ampulla* as rich oasis through the interaction of contents and container. Like Medieval relics of dried holy blood which miraculously liquefy on special occasions, the true power of Menas *ampullae* may have lain in their ritual performance, as different elements of 'being there' at Abu Mena, the sight of the saint, the texture of the desert, and the oil from the tomb, united to transform the object.⁶

Excavation at Abu Mena has revealed the contours and development of the ancient site (Yasin, this volume, Figure 10.4). Building peaked under the emperor Justinian in the sixth century, when many pre-existing structures were elaborated. The site focussed on the saint's body in his tomb, an underground burial chamber or *hypogeum* dating to the fourth century. Initially a small mausoleum was built

above it, followed in the early fifth century by a three-aisled basilica with a small baptistery, to which a further basilica was later added, creating a 14m wide nave (the largest in Egypt at the time). The extra space was probably needed to accommodate the increasing traffic of pilgrims, hence the baptistery was also enlarged to conduct triple baptisms, suggesting that many pilgrims received baptism in conjunction with visiting Menas' tomb. In the mid-sixth century the original basilica over the tomb was replaced with a Syrian-style double *tetraconch* with marble colonnades. This *tetraconch* was contained within a rectangular wall, making its shape visible only from the inside. Beneath the altar, directly above the tomb, a large alabaster vessel was sunk into the floor covered by a marble slab with a hole in it, presumably for pouring oil through, like other types of reliquary at this time. It was found full of coins coated with chemical residues indicating that the vessel contained oil with large amounts of suspended incense (probably frankincense).⁷ External wall niches projected to the north and south, which probably housed reliquaries through which oil was poured to become sanctified. Beside the apse, two flights of stairs descended into the tomb, one for entering and one for exiting, as pilgrims encountered the saint in person.⁸

Behind the main basilica complex was a hemispherical open space, lined with small rooms, which offered incubation facilities for those hopeful of a dream visitation from Saint Menas. Stretching in front of the main basilica complex was a large enclosed and colonnaded courtyard, with a well in its centre and shops lining the edges that probably touted pilgrimage wares. The main entrance to the courtyard, which was, itself, the main access route into the basilica and tomb, was via a long colonnaded walkway that stretched from the main entrance gate in the city walls and tapered into a much narrower point as it reached the square. A mass of hosteleries lay to the west of the tapered end of the main street, ranging in size and quality of accommodation, and beside the main gateway lay two large bath complexes.⁹

From this archaeological information we can gain an insight into the sort of pilgrimage experience that Abu Mena afforded the individual travelling through the site. Similar to the approach across the pool of nectar to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, what is most prominent is a sense of progression from open to closed space. Pilgrims would have reached Abu Mena by open land and sea, on boats, pack animals, and foot. They would have travelled among other pilgrims, but at times they may have found their group to be the only one on the road for a certain distance; the trickle of itinerants progressing to the shrine was on the move, and thus could be evenly spaced. They would have passed through settlements, inns, hostels, farms, and perhaps stopped in churches and at *laurai* (miniature versions of the great cult centre to come); a rhythm of desert and fertile land, proximity to, and distance from, other people played out by their journeying feet, a rhythm that reached its crescendo at Abu Mena.

As the goal of so much movement, Abu Mena inevitably created a bottleneck, or pooling, of pilgrims, an effect which was amplified by the site's architectural features. Peter Grossmann, excavator of the site, notes that the colonnade was designed "to raise the tension of the pilgrims arriving", and this is comparable to the queues

that coagulate the motion of visitors to the Harmandir Sahib, particularly at the main entrances to the complex, and in the slow procession across the lake.¹⁰ The momentum of travel diminished and crowds thickened the closer pilgrims came to Menas' body, just as they do towards the *Adi Granth*. Passing beneath the city gate, the throng of people was increasingly squeezed together as the colonnade tapered towards the shrine. The rhythm of distance and proximity of the journey began to coagulate in the immersion of each pilgrim among the mass of others, the sight, sound, warmth, texture, smell, and pressure of other bodies closing in about them. This bottleneck squeezed into the enclosed courtyard in front of the basilica complex, a space walled all around with the holy things of pilgrimage being loudly hawked, and which directed lines of sight only toward sky above, fellow pilgrims around, and basilica complex in front.

Here the momentum of travel almost ceased, as a slow trickle from the massed pilgrims sought entrance through the tiny door of the holy church, miraculous oil oozing from niches in its walls. Like the awe-inspiring revelation of the inner Golden Temple, the contrast between interior and exterior would have been pronounced. Inside, a darkened enclosed room would have disorientated the pilgrims' senses, awakening them to the new surroundings; cooler, quieter, rich with the smell of incense, dimly lit, fellow occupants of the space now a smaller more select group also including clergy officiating the procession. The shape of the church space would have been surprising, its *tetraconch* hidden by the rectangular exterior, creating a sense of mystery and awe through disorientation. The darkness and closeness of the space increased as descent began down the steps to the tomb among a unidirectional pull of traffic towards the saint; sounds becoming more muffled, vision less clear while it grew accustomed to the artificial light. The experience culminated in a tiny room, the tomb, a highly intimate space in which the pilgrim's body could press most closely to the saint's, realising the intimacy of veneration in the most profound way, so quiet, so close, so present with the saint; the goal of a lengthy preparatory process, and the end of a long journey.

The intimacy of this experience is also emphasised by the oil, which touched the saintly relics and was transformed by them. Apart from oozing from the external walls of the basilica complex, it did so as well from the lamps in the saint's tomb, and from the earth around his body which empowered the contents of the jar beneath the altar; the oil was part of the very *locum sanctum*, spilling its holiness into the lives of those who encountered it. It is advantageous that something of the character of this oil survives in the chemical residues of the alabaster jar beneath the altar. Its infusion with incense indicates that Menas had a unique smell, perhaps a means of validating his presence and identifying his cult. The true power of the saint may have been realised in his divine oily scent, a scent that would have filled the enclosed shrine and increased in intensity the closer the pilgrim reached to the inner recesses of Menas' holy resting place.

The role of scent suggests further observations about the function of the Menas *ampullae*. While olive oil will block the pores of unglazed clay and sit on the surface, essential oils, such as frankincense oil, will absorb, and for this reason there is a market in the modern world for clay scent diffusers. It is possible that

the choice of porous, unglazed clay for Menas *ampullae* was not just a matter of price but also one of olfactory properties; the fragrant oil could absorb into the body of the flask interior and diffuse whenever it was unstoppered, lasting for some months. Alternatively, a few drops of the oil rubbed into the Saint's image would diffuse scent for about a day. In this way, the substance of Menas *ampullae* offered a technology capable of preserving and taking away the scent of the site.

Abu Mena afforded other experiences which might feel intimate. The individual pilgrim was at all times unavoidably immersed in the crowd of other pilgrims. According to Grossmann, the evidence indicates that at night, pilgrims slept in hostels, often in communal rooms (privacy came at great expense and would in most cases be for groups, such as families, rather than individuals), and sometimes in makeshift shelters.¹¹ This would create an unavoidable sense that one's experience was shared with others. We might reconstruct a sense of community similar to that at the Harmandir Sahib, especially in the shared *langar* meal, and in the evening, when the day's rituals are winding up, the constant flow of movement slows, and people take the opportunity to get to know their fellow visitors. The lack of identifiably private spaces at Abu Mena suggests that every aspect of visiting the site was communal, and intimately associated with others' experience. In this way, phenomenological experience of pilgrimage can construct collective identity.

The scale of Abu Mena's bath complexes indicates that cleansing was an important feature of a visit.¹² Peter Grossmann favours a utilitarian rather than ritual interpretation; after such a long journey in a dusty environment a bath was needed.¹³ However, the idea that any experience at Abu Mena could be wholly secular is misleading; cleansing does not have to be metaphorical in order to feel spiritual. The proximity of the baths to the town's main gate, rather than being 'off the beaten track', suggests that bathing took place before or after a visit to the shrine, that is, in conjunction with it. In these complexes hundreds of pilgrims could communally prepare themselves for an encounter with Saint Menas, or for the journey home, unavoidably aware of sharing this aim with fellow bather-pilgrims. Like the transformation of desert into fertile abundance, of dry clay into shining, fragrant image of Menas, and of catechumen into baptised Christian, pilgrims could also feel their own bodies transformed through encounter with water and oil at the baths. As after any bathing experience, they would emerge shining and fragranced with oil, but in the specific context of this pilgrimage their bodies would create a visual and olfactory parallel to the shining, fragrant Saint himself, thus mimetically imitating the divine qualities of the site.

At Abu Mena, then, drawing from the archaeological evidence and comparison with a contemporary pilgrimage site, we might suggest that pilgrims experienced sensory disorientation and saturation as they reached Menas in his tomb, the motion of their journey coagulating into a moment of almost claustrophobic intimacy, effused with divine scent. The transformative qualities of the site and the Saint could be replicated by pilgrims' bodies, which were transformed by shining oil at the baths, becoming mimeses of sanctity. Menas' oil was replicated further through its removal in clay bottles moulded in the saint's image and composed of desert sand, souvenirs which made the very experience of the site itself

mobile.¹⁴ The communal immersion of pilgrim among pilgrims furthered this sense of mimesis, as one's own transformative experiences were replicated among the pilgrim collective, visibly, olfactorily, and audibly (through the narratives that pilgrims might tell each other and non-pilgrims during and after the event).

Qal'at Sem'an and ascension

The Syrian shrine of the original stylite saint Symeon the Elder also offered pilgrims a mimetic experience. Qal'at Sem'an (Yasin, this volume, Figure 10.1) was embellished, probably by the emperor Zeno, in the late fifth century after the saint's death and the translation of his body to Antioch. What remained for the veneration of pilgrims at the site of his asceticism was the last of the columns atop which Symeon had stood for 37 years, estimated to have been 15–18m high (Figure 11.3). Enclosing the column was an octagonal building, originally topped by a wooden roof which collapsed in an earthquake not long after its construction, leaving the space open to the sky. To the north, south, west, and east were erected four adjoining rectangular basilicas (the largest to the east with a triple apse where liturgical services were conducted), creating a cruciform complex.¹⁵ A monastery was adjoined to this complex by a chapel, and to the south an octagonal baptistery and hostelries cut across the middle of the whole site, which was enclosed on all four sides by a wall.¹⁶

Symeon had located his column at one of the highest points in the area, on a hilltop in Jabal Sem'an, the northernmost area of the limestone massif known as



Figure 11.3 Qal'at Sem'an, remains of the stylite's column.

Photo: Troels Myrup Kristensen.

the Dead Cities of Syria. It was c. 60km from the nearest major town, Aleppo, and despite being a major site of pilgrimage was not on any major pilgrimage routes. However, from the main roads in the plain of Chalcis below, Symeon's column was visible up to a radius of 2.5km.¹⁷ The only access route to the shrine lay at the base of the hill, in the village of Telneshe, or Dayr Sem'an, which rapidly expanded in response to the influx of pilgrims as Symeon's popularity grew, offering shops, housing, monasteries, and inns.¹⁸

In order to see the stylite's column, pilgrims, like those at Abu Mena and the Harmandir Sahib, had to pass through a series of entranceways which served to narrow the flow of traffic.¹⁹ What is marked about Qal'at Sem'an, by contrast, is the process of ascent toward the object of pilgrimage. Dayr Sem'an was the first port of call for the stream of pilgrims, and as at Abu Mena the urban streets restricted the flow of traffic from the open road in the valley as it approached the main site. The climb began as the processional way commenced just outside the village at the base of the hill, where the flow of pilgrims was channelled along an inclining street lined with shops that probably touted pilgrimage wares, and enclosed their progress. After a short distance, the throng narrowed, and inevitably slowed, as it passed under a triumphal arch (Yasin, Figure 10.2). This offered a moment of contemplation as movement stalled, pilgrims' eyes raising upwards to the sweeping arc supported by sets of columns that foreshadowed both the architecture of the great complex ahead and the height of the spectacular column occupied by the saint.²⁰ From here, the pilgrim continued to climb uphill, veering to the left along a more steeply inclined 400m street lined by a bazaar which continued to enclose her progress and limit any view of the surrounding open countryside. Attention was focussed forward, not on the scenery but on the climb.

Once the sanctuary itself was reached, it was accessed by squeezing through a triple gateway (or *propylon*: Yasin, Figure 10.3) in the enclosure wall onto a more gently ascending lower terrace. Crossing this open square, pilgrims were again squeezed through a double passageway in the buildings at the southern extreme of the main complex. Continuing to travel uphill, they crossed a larger courtyard to reach the basilica complex on the upper terrace, climbing a few steps to enter the martyrion by a four-fold door in the southern basilica, composed of arches and columns (like the segregated procession to the Golden Temple, these doorways could differentiate pilgrims by gender).²¹ Visible in the centre of the dim basilica complex was the holy column, gleaming in a contrasting pool of natural light. The nave of the basilica, lined by columns which again foreshadowed the towering height to come, channelled pilgrims towards the centre where, passing under a final archway adjoining the nave to the octagonal atrium, they arrived at the column in all its direct, unmediated presence. Its height demanded they crane their necks upwards to see the peak towering above them in the open air.

Like at the Harmandir Sahib and Abu Mena, the individual progressed towards a focal point, the relic-heart of the site, by traversing through increasingly enclosed spaces and a series of gateways. The architecture progressively focussed sensory experience upon the object of pilgrimage, heightening the pilgrim's anticipation of what was to come and awareness of her own body and its immediate environment.

This might include the closer presence of fellow pilgrims, the progression from open, empty countryside to urban and enclosed sacred space, and the ascent from low plain to the heavenly peak that was the visible goal of approaching roads from miles around. Signposting the journey were columns and arches, architectural features which emphasise height and draw the eye upward, priming the pilgrim's expectations of the towering column that was the apex of this journey. While pilgrims at Abu Mena descended toward the intimacy of the saint's presence at his tomb, at Qal'at Sem'an they climbed toward the heavens.

Susan Ashbrook Harvey has demonstrated the late antique association of stylite saints with incense, both of which ascended heavenward, the former by means of a pillar, the latter in columns of curling fragrant smoke.²² Like the saint on his pillar, the pilgrim to Qal'at Sem'an also put heavenly ascent into practice. If the association between the ascent of incense and stylite was acutely apparent to adherents of the cult, then it is likely that pilgrims also made a connection between their own ascent and that of the saint. In this way, the layout of the site could represent the saint's column in the same manner as did incense. Pilgrims moved towards Symeon by mimicking his journey heavenwards, thus replicating the very essence of his sainthood.

Ascent defined experience of the site, and the sequence of entrances into increasingly enclosed spaces heightened anticipation of the final revealed spectacle of the column. Travel along, through, and up was the rhythmic sequence of this pilgrimage, and it culminated in an upward gaze. The goal of this pilgrimage was visible from the valleys beneath, yet it was obscured by the site's architecture, only fully visible once the pilgrim arrived in the centre of the basilica complex. Like the awe-inspiring sudden revelation of the lavish decor of the Golden Temple close-up after the slow progress across the enclosed causeway, at Qal'at Sem'an what had formerly only been seen from afar was suddenly revealed close to, saturating the pilgrims' senses. The site prescribed mimetic behaviour and inspired awe through a game of concealing and revealing; through its careful management of the pilgrim's experience Symeon's divine ordinance as recorded in his *Life* could be realised: "many shall you turn from error to knowledge of the truth".²³ By inhabiting higher and higher columns, Symeon came to know divinity more and more acutely, such that his body and the means of its height, the column, became equal partners in the construction of his sainthood. Symeon's sanctity depended upon the column as a physical object and as an extension of his body; thus, after his death, both body and column received equal reverence as relics. The column could continue to reveal the stylite's special knowledge that divinity could become proximate through upward travel.

In view of the significance of ascent at Qal'at Sem'an it is not surprising to find the presence of coiling shapes on souvenir tokens from the site. The classification of these shapes is debated, yet whatever their precise identity a coil certainly embodies upward motion, just as does curling incense smoke.²⁴ Serpents are also found coiling around Symeon's column in depictions of the saint, most famously on a gilt silver votive plaque discovered nearby at Maa'arrat al-Nu'man.²⁵ In Symeon's *Life* he evades demonic coiling serpents by raising his eyes

heavenward, that is, by reaching higher than they are able to climb.²⁶ An image of a serpent coiling upward invites the eye to follow its motion, and this ascent may continue up and beyond the restrictions of its height. Any coil invites the raising of eyes heavenward, and the revelation of Symeon's column in front of the pilgrim in the centre of the basilica would likewise draw the eye upwards. Interestingly, it is also possible that pilgrimage at Qal'at Sem'an culminated in the circulation of pilgrims around the column; Evagrius Scholasticus speaks of a ritual circulation of the column seven times on the anniversary of Symeon's death, that is, the coiling of a crowd around the column.²⁷ Thus the pilgrim's ascent ended not just with the feet but also with the eyes, and these souvenir tokens invite repetition of this way of seeing, enabling pilgrims to relive their experience of the site, as did *ampullae* for visitors to Abu Mena.

The design of Qal'at Sem'an encouraged a certain mimetic performance of the saint's embodied practice among visitors. It obliged their slow ascent, peaking at the column, mimicking the mode of inhabiting the environment which made Symeon a saint. In this way, the bodily experience of pilgrims at the site was a mimesis of Symeon's way of life, within the very environment that he himself inhabited.

Conclusion

The precise movements of individual pilgrims in Late Antiquity may not have been directly recorded for us, but the remains of the sites themselves enshrine a set of possibilities about how such individuals could and could not move around. At both Abu Mena and Qal'at Sem'an, the landscape and architecture controlled and directed the movements of pilgrims in ways which materialised and reinforced the meanings of the individual cults. For visitors, the potential for mimicking the holy qualities of the cult through their own bodily actions was inescapable, and must be seen as intrinsic and essential to the experience and meaning of these pilgrimages as a form of behavioural, sacred mimesis.

It remains to be seen whether other sites of late antique pilgrimage can also be interpreted in these terms, and whether sacred mimesis was a feature of late antique pilgrimage more broadly. However, a cursory consideration of sites treated in this volume suggests that this may prove a profitable line of investigation. At Meriamlik (Kristensen, this volume), pilgrims reached the sanctuary by traversing a rock-cut passage lined with tombs, in order to revere a saint who had miraculously vanished into a rocky crevice and was now entombed within that same rocky landscape. Pilgrims to the White Monastery (Blanke, this volume) celebrated Saint Shenoute's founding of a communal monastic way of life by engaging in large-scale communal meals (comparable, perhaps, to the sense of community at the Harmandir Sahib's *langar*) and giving and receiving food. Like Qal'at Sem'an, ascent was a feature of pilgrimage to Saint Catherine's, Sinai (Yasin, this volume), a martyr whose remains ascended to the mountain on the wings of angels.

These sites and their material culture need not have been intentionally designed in order to be experienced in the ways I have suggested. The whispering gallery

of St Paul's Cathedral in London was not an intentional design feature, yet its acoustic effects are highly apparent and make a distinct impression on visitors. As my own experience of the Harmandir Sahib demonstrated, the ways that one is able to move around, particularly in the context of a crowd, deeply affect one's impression of a place and the meaning that is constructed. The narrowing of lines of sight, the focus on a central object, the slowing of movement as the centre is approached, the containment and channelling of crowds through entrances and passageways, the emphasis on communal use of space, all of these features, apparent across the three sites studied, might not have been intentionally designed, but their effects are unavoidable for bodies moving through those spaces, and are manifest in the heightening of anticipation, the sense of community, and the awe-inspiring saturation of the senses as the goal is reached.

Throughout this chapter I have applied a geographical notion of pilgrimage as a body moving through space, and sensory experience is essential to this model. Of course, there are problems with phenomenology, not least the fact that culture and identity (including, for example, gender and age) as well as bodily capacity (for example mobility and height), and psychological state (for example mood or mental health) intersect to create diverse perspectives which such an approach is in danger of homogenising, or even modernising. However, it is important to remember that pilgrimage is about people, and without any first-person perspective we de-humanise our sites, seeing monuments rather than their interactions with bodies, interactions through which the meaning of a pilgrimage is constructed. By comparing phenomenological perspectives, real and reconstructed, I hope to have shown that the motions and sensory experiences of historical pilgrims are not only accessible to us through material remains, but also are essential considerations for our understanding of the form and function of ancient pilgrimage.

Notes

- 1 Davis 1998, 303; Grossmann 1998, 285.
- 2 Bangert 2004, 32–33.
- 3 I understand pilgrimage in a geographical sense as a spatial event of human–environment interaction, that is, the movement of bodies through space: Scriven 2014, 249–261. In the late antique context, I also understand it more specifically to be a means of acquiring knowledge and experience of the divine.
- 4 Bangert 2004, 41–46; Witt 2000.
- 5 Bangert 2004, 45; Ashmolean Museum *et al.* 2003.
- 6 For an example of Medieval blood relics, see that of St Januarius in Naples. C.f. Walker-Bynum 2011 on the centrality of transformation in the late Medieval Christian understanding of holy matter.
- 7 Coins were also found in a number of water pipes on the site and pushed into cracks between paving stones in the church, indicating an extensive practice of depositing coins as offerings: Bangert 2004, 109.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 97–118; Grossmann 1986; 1989.
- 9 Grossmann 1986; 1989; 1998. Cf. Yasin, this volume.
- 10 Grossmann 1998, 287. Cf. Yasin this volume.
- 11 Grossmann 1986.

- 12 While other late antique pilgrimage sites have baths, the size and number of those at Abu Mena is unusual. Qal'at Sem'an, for example, offers a small set of bathing facilities outside the walls of the site proper, and to reach them pilgrims must leave the processional way.
- 13 Grossmann 1986, 20. Though he does concede they may have been used ritually at the end of Lent: Grossmann 1998, 292.
- 14 Cf. Hunter-Crawley 2012, 135–156. Indeed, bottles in the shape of human heads have been discovered at Abu Mena, which Grossmann argues also contained holy oil and represented the pilgrims themselves: Grossmann 1998, 299. If this is the case, such bottles could re-enact bathing or baptism.
- 15 The eastern basilica now sits at a skewed angle due to seismic activity: Karakhanian *et al.* 2008, 122–147.
- 16 Biscop 2006, 75–83; Bogisch 2005, 52–72; Peña 1996, 94–101; 2000; Schachner 2010, 329–397; Sodini and Biscop 2011, 11–59. The state of the site at the time of writing is described in Danti and Prescott 2014.
- 17 Schachner 2010, fig. 15.
- 18 Biscop 2006; Nasrallah 1971, 165–178; Schachner 2010.
- 19 Cf. Yasin, this volume.
- 20 See Yasin, this volume.
- 21 The southern entrance was a sixth-century adaptation from the original western entrance: Karakhanian *et al.* 2008. *Contra* Yasin, this volume, while Evagrius Scholasticus (*Ecc. Hist.* 1.14) describes male-only access to the basilica on the annual feast day, we need not assume this distinction applied year-round.
- 22 Ashbrook Harvey 2006.
- 23 Translation adapted from Lent 1915, 112.
- 24 Pilgrim Tokens from Qal'at Sem'an, 6th–7th century, British Museum, 1973, 0501.58-70. For discussion, see: Rahmani 1999, 92–104; Vikan 2010, 41–42.
- 25 Repoussé plaque, 6th century, Musée du Louvre, Paris, BJ 2180.
- 26 Lent 1915, 125; 137.
- 27 *Ecc. Hist.* 1.14.

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12 The allure of the saint

Late antique pilgrimage to the monastery of St Shenoute

Louise Blanke

The desert, the holy man and the monastery

From the first centuries of Late Antiquity (c. 300–800 CE), the cult of the saints engulfed the biblical lands in a dense network of churches and shrines.¹ Egypt was considered a part of the biblical lands through its association with biblical heroes like Moses and Joseph and from the fifth century onwards, towns and villages began to associate themselves with the flight of the Holy Family (Figure 12.1).² At the same time, hagiographic writings and travelogues spread the word about holy men and women with great spiritual powers who lived alone in the desert, and of shrines of martyrs where one could seek healing or redemption from sins.³

The most famous and influential hagiography of an Egyptian saint was perhaps the *Life of St Antony* by Athanasius, the twentieth patriarch of Alexandria (328–373).⁴ The *Life* reports on Antony's path from ordinary Christian to a model of ascetic perfection.⁵ Antony's spiritual journey reached its culmination through his further withdrawal from humanity into the desert, and towards the end of his life he attracted a colony of aspiring ascetics, disciples and pilgrims, who gathered around his desert abode.⁶

Through Antony's encounter with devils and demons, Athanasius constructed the desert as the assumed location of ascetic perfection.⁷ This myth of the desert gave birth to the idea of the solitary hermit and the success of Athanasius's portrayal of Antony led to a literary *imitatio patrum*, where ascetic power was measured against the distance from urban society.⁸ Literary works of fiction such as Jerome's *Life of St Paul*, in which Antony himself is made a pilgrim, and the acclaimed fourth-century tale of Paphnutius meeting with the hermit Onnophrius were based on this ideal.⁹ This tale tells of Paphnutius who travelled for two weeks through the desert before he came across Onnophrius – a man so holy that he had 'become an angel on earth, and his withdrawn landscape a reflection of heaven'.¹⁰

Although textual evidence suggests that the town-based ascetic was more common and also more visible in the daily lives of the residents of late antique Egypt, this type of monastic lifestyle was overshadowed in the literary sources by the ideal of the desert and the monks who chose to reside in this harsh environment.¹¹ Through this literary genre, the desert monk became a holy man and in the words of Georgia Frank a 'living monument of the biblical past' and a goal for sacred

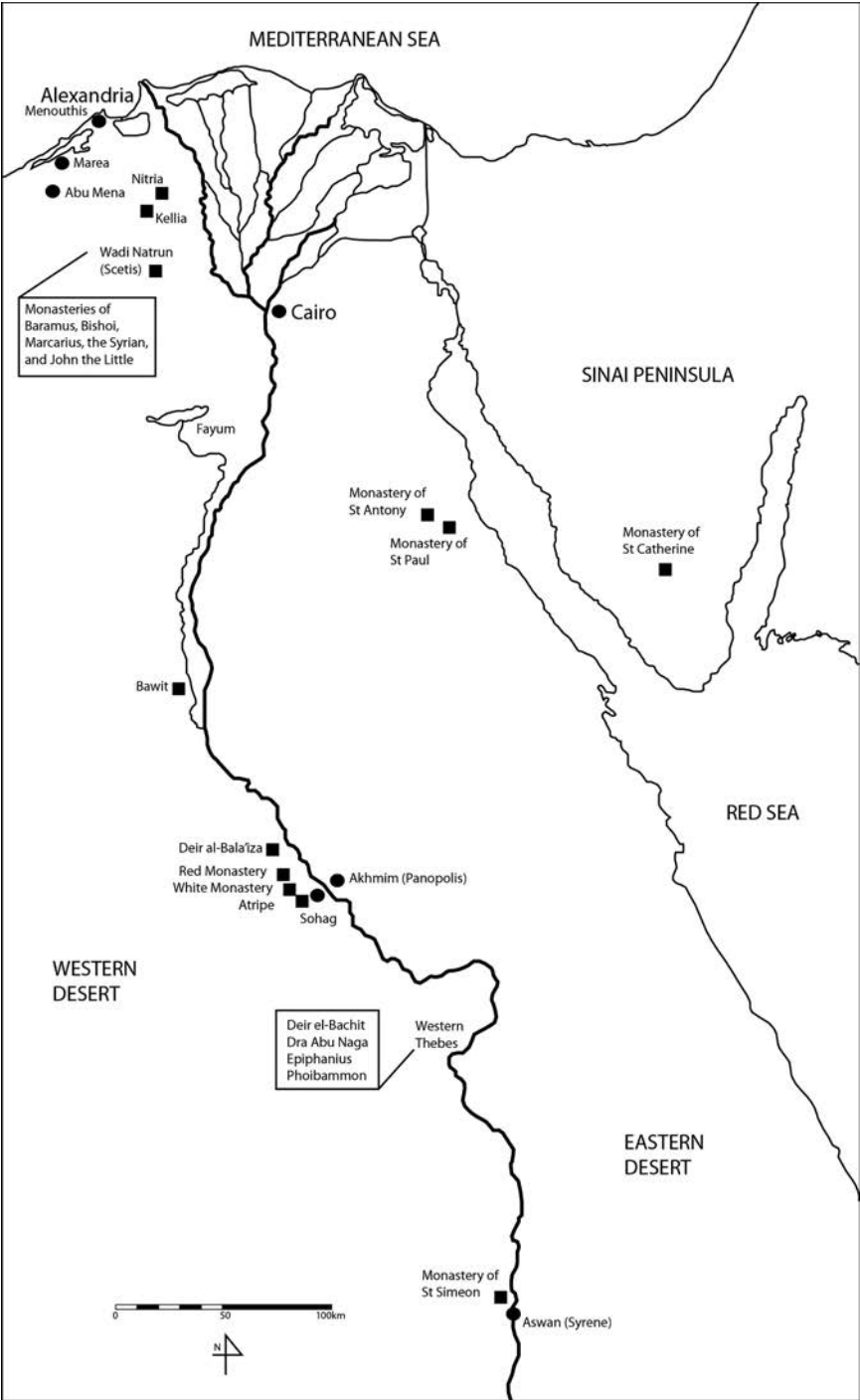


Figure 12.1 Map of Egypt, showing sites mentioned in article (by Louise Blanke).

travel.¹² Pilgrimage to Egypt flourished from the 370s onwards. Among the more famous fourth-century pilgrims were Paula and Jerome, the wealthy Roman widow Melania, John Cassian, Germanus and Palladius, who wrote the *Lausiac History*, and a party of seven monks whose journey was recounted in the *History of the Monks in Egypt*.¹³ The pilgrims' writings further supported the literary ideal of the holy man in the Egyptian desert. Where the desert was made a city of monks by Athanasius, the *History of the Monks in Egypt* claimed that there was no town in Egypt that was 'not surrounded by hermitages as if by a wall'.¹⁴

Egypt's 'new' sacred landscape attracted pilgrims to worship at shrines and participate in the religious feasts that celebrated the saints and martyrs.¹⁵ At first, these cults were based in towns and cities, but from the sixth century onwards, monasteries gradually became the most important sites in Egypt's sacred landscapes.¹⁶ The monasteries obtained the relics of established cults and promoted their own saints by, for example, changing their names to honour their specific patron saint. This process has been described by Arietta Papaconstantinou as the monastisation of the cult of the saints.¹⁷ That pilgrimage remained an important aspect of Egyptian Christian lives after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century is clear from a text associated with the Patriarch Yusab I (831–849), who stressed the development of income-generating projects for the church, including pilgrimage sites along with other productive enterprises.¹⁸

Egypt's broad network of pilgrimage shrines included sites of international fame, such as the pilgrimage centre dedicated to Abu Mena,¹⁹ St Catherine's Monastery and the healing shrine to SS Cyrus and John at Menouthis, while monasteries and hermits in Scetis, Nitria and Kellia also attracted foreign pilgrims.²⁰ Apart from Western Thebes, textual sources suggest that the fame of most cults in the monasteries in the Upper Egyptian Nile Valley remained local, with a catchment area that was limited to nearby towns and villages.²¹ For this reason, travellers' accounts that describe the built environment and the activities that took place at the monasteries are rare and written sources suggesting pilgrimage mainly consist of liturgical calendars, inscriptions or hagiographic references.

Although these textual sources are full of references to pilgrimage, identifying the material footprint left behind at shrines and monasteries often poses a problem. The presence of pilgrimage in the archaeological record has primarily been detected through objects such as pilgrim flasks, tokens and emblems carrying the name or image of a saint, or through textiles as recently suggested by both Stephen Davis and Troels Myrup Kristensen.²² Such objects are rarely found among the material remains of monasteries and the limited excavation and poor preservation of many sites mean that it can be challenging to establish the presence of temporary residents and to reconstruct ritual activities from the archaeological remains.

Pilgrimage centres that attracted large numbers of international visitors were remarkable for their built environment, which in some cases were constructed specifically to narrate the visitors' experience. At Abu Mena, the architectural layout guided the visitors through an increasingly more narrow processional route before arriving at the shrine,²³ while the natural landscape surrounding St Catherine's was translated through a series of architectural modifications to commemorate

and re-enact the biblical stories of Moses.²⁴ Both sites were geared ritually as well as logistically to accommodate large numbers of visitors and contained extensive auxiliary facilities, such as dormitories, refectories and even bathhouses (Abu Mena). Although many of Upper Egypt's monasteries have been identified as pilgrimage centres through associated textual sources, this was in most cases not their primary function. As such, the very nature of the monasteries poses a challenge. They served to accommodate groups of men or women who gathered to share a communal ascetic lifestyle, which involved ritualised practices in and around the monasteries' churches and shrines. Without the presence of objects sold or given to pilgrims as eulogia, it is often not possible to distinguish the material remains of the religious life designed for and by monastics from the ritual activities carried out by visitors. Equally, permanent residents and transient visitors would have required the same type of auxiliary structures to maintain their presence.

Our understanding of pilgrimage to the White Monastery – the focus of this chapter – suffers from these shortcomings. From the sixth or seventh century onwards, the textual sources suggest that pilgrims played a part in the monastery's ritual life: particularly important was the commemoration of the third abbot, Shenoute. Shenoute was presented in art and text not only as a driving force in the formation of Upper Egyptian monasticism, but also as a desert saint, whose withdrawal into the desert was reminiscent of Antony, Moses, Elijah and Christ himself. His influence reached far beyond the White Monastery as demonstrated by recent archaeological work on the monastery of John the Little in Wadi Natrun, where inscriptions suggest a continuous veneration of Shenoute at this site into the ninth and tenth centuries.²⁵ Shenoute's popularity, however, remained within Egypt's borders and the White Monastery saw no imperial financial infusion, as was the case of shrines of international fame such as Abu Mena and St Catherine's in Egypt, Qal'at Sem'an in Syria and Aya Thecla (Meriamlik) in Anatolia.²⁶ Instead, the textual record suggests that the monastery maintained a local significance and venerated a pantheon of local saints and martyrs, thus attracting visitors for whom these characters would have been a familiar part of daily life.

Defining the nature of the visitation to the White Monastery presents another methodological challenge. Matthew Dillon's definition of pilgrimage as involving an overnight stay would disqualify many of the travellers as pilgrims.²⁷ Instead, visitation to the monastic communities generally sits more comfortably with Joy McCorriston's more flexible definition in which 'pilgrimages (1) require mobility, (2) affirm social identity, (3) enable economic exchange, (4) have a temporal punctuation, and finally (5) incorporate a performative aspect, such as ritual and feasting'.²⁸ It is, however, important to emphasise that not all visitors were pilgrims. Merchants and builders would service the monastery and the monastics were in some instances allowed a visit from a family member. It is also worth considering if the functions that the monastery performed for the local community such as baptism and burial should be seen as a part of the pilgrimage process.

Despite these challenges, the White Monastery's combination of a substantial archaeological record and a comprehensively studied and published textual corpus presents a rare opportunity to examine pilgrimage to an Upper Egyptian

monastery. This unique situation allows us to frame the references to pilgrimage and the rituals described in the texts within the physical remains of the monastery, and also examine architectural features that lack a textual reference. The case study is preceded by an overview of the history of the site. Thereafter, the textual sources are used as a starting point from which the archaeological remains are analysed. In this way, the ritual practices that were available to pilgrims are discussed alongside evidence of the facilities that could have served the needs of transient visitors.

The White Monastery

The White Monastery is located halfway between Cairo and Aswan, some 5 km east of the modern city of Sohag. The monastery was founded in the fourth century by a monk named Pgol, but its fame as a bastion of Egyptian Christianity results directly from the reputation of the third leader, Shenoute (347–465) – a prolific writer of Coptic literature, a zealous anti-pagan and an instrumental figure in the flourishing of the monastic movement. Under Shenoute's rule, the monastery was the leading partner of three federated communities.²⁹ The White Monastery aside, the federation included a women's house in the village to the south in Atriye, a smaller men's congregation to the north, commonly known as the Red Monastery, as well as male and female hermits who lived alone in the desert.³⁰

Shenoute's fame in modern scholarship derives from his extensive writings. Stephen Emmel concluded that Shenoute's work was transmitted in two main collections: in nine volumes of Canons (letters) and eight volumes of Discourses (public sermons).³¹ The codices survived through continuous copying over the centuries, preserving about 10–15% of the original text.³² They provide an extraordinarily detailed picture of Christian life in the fifth century and offer a unique insight into aspects of monastic life and organisation. However, the author's fame never spread beyond Egypt, his works were not translated into Greek and he is not mentioned in travel-ogues or accounts of Egypt's holy men.³³ It seems that his cult remained a strictly Egyptian phenomenon with its catchment area in the local region and, to a lesser extent, the greater Nile Valley.

Shenoute's immediate successor Besa is known through his own writings, comprising a corpus of letters and sermons,³⁴ but thereafter the leaders of the White Monastery disappear into obscurity for centuries. A variety of fragmented sources, however, gives some evidence of the activities that took place from the sixth to the sixteenth century and allows us to link individual names and dates to the monastery. The continuous use of the monastery can for example be traced through circumstantial references in papyri, manuscripts and inscriptions from the White Monastery itself, as well as external sources, such as Arabic travellers' accounts and histories.³⁵ These sources not only attest to the continuous use of the site as a monastery, but also document the increasing importance and veneration of Shenoute.

The recent history of the White Monastery is attested in the accounts of European travellers from the seventeenth century onwards. They report that the use of the White Monastery was now confined to a village located within the church itself.

The surrounding areas were used for livestock and were widely quarried for mud bricks used as fertiliser.³⁶ This situation persisted into the twentieth century, when the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* purchased the church, evicted the villagers and undertook extensive restoration of the building. In the 1990s the White Monastery was re-established by the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt and the site was once again transformed into a thriving monastic community.

Three projects have examined the archaeological remains of the ancient monastery. In 1907, Petrie exposed an area of almost 16,000 m² to the south of the main church.³⁷ The Supreme Council of Antiquities (henceforth SCA) excavated six distinct areas between 1985 and 2011 covering about 19,500 m². Since 2005, the White Monastery Federation Project and later the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project (South) has continued the exploration of the site by combining new excavations with careful recording of the architecture exposed by the SCA.³⁸

The long history of the White Monastery has altered the monastic landscape in a process that has greatly affected the material (textual and archaeological) available for our interpretation of the site. The church, for example, underwent several phases of remodelling, repair and restoration – not only in the twentieth century, but also as a part of its continuous use in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For this reason, the process of Shenoute's transformation from a monastic leader to a saint remains obscure, but the effect is evident in the textual sources summarised below. In time, he became one of Egypt's famous saints and today the week-long annual feast of Shenoute around 1st July is among the most popular of Egypt's Christian festivals. During this feast, the monastery expands its reach far beyond the limits of the local community. It draws in pilgrims from throughout Egypt and the monastery is transformed into a buzzing tent city, populated with pilgrims, who come seeking the blessing of the patron saint.³⁹

Pilgrimage to the White Monastery: The textual evidence

There are no textual or archaeological remains suggesting that pilgrims found their way to the White Monastery during the earliest history of the site. On the contrary, the monastery's third leader Shenoute expressed his disgust at the contemporary Christian obsession with the hunt for the bones of martyrs. He condemned the practice of placing martyrs' bones in churches and chapels and raged against the worship that took place at shrines. In his view, this form of worship was surely the work of demons, as it included singing, feasting and drinking to a point that led to fornication and even to murder.⁴⁰

This attitude towards pilgrimage is confirmed in Layton's studies of Shenoute's writings, in which Layton suggests that civilians could visit for purposes of business or 'pious curiosity', but were confined to the gatehouse where they could remain for as long as three days.⁴¹ Here, the visitors would be greeted by a gatehouse keeper who, according to Layton, had been chosen for this task for his diplomatic skills.

Following Shenoute's death, the attitude towards pilgrimage gradually changed. There are several indicators suggesting that the White Monastery became a destination in the Egyptian pilgrimage industry during the sixth or seventh century.

Although not an expression of pilgrimage in itself, a reference to the 'Monastery of St Shenoute' in a papyrus of 567 CE reveals that Shenoute had now become the monastery's patron saint.⁴²

A hagiographic text known as the *Life of Shenoute* and traditionally ascribed to Shenoute's successor Besa paints a different picture of visitors' access to the monastery. In Heike Behlmer's reading of the text, visitors from nearby towns and villages came for Mass and prayer.⁴³ Other visitors included ecclesiastics or monks from nearby monasteries, as well as people who were looking for relief in difficult economic circumstances, or consolation for emotional or spiritual anguish.⁴⁴ In a recent study of the *Life of Shenoute*, Lubomierski convincingly argues that the text was not the work of Besa, but was compiled and amended throughout Late Antiquity.⁴⁵ Therefore, the *Life* is not a testament to the working of the monastery in the fifth century, but a document of the situation in perhaps the sixth or seventh centuries. The text not only reveals a changing attitude towards visitors since the time of Shenoute, but also suggests that they would have formed a visible presence in the monastery.

The importance of the text becomes evident in Papaconstantinou's suggestion that late antique hagiographies served to promote 'specific cults, and more specifically, cult sites and their local economies'.⁴⁶ Although there is no direct mention of pilgrimage, circumstantial references can be interpreted within this framework. The hagiography, for example, quotes Shenoute as saying that

He who cannot visit Jerusalem in order to prostrate himself before the cross on which Jesus the Messiah has died should come to offer in this church together with all the angels, and I shall pray for the sins they have committed previously, and whoever hears me, his sins shall not be held against him, even including the dead buried in this mountain, because I shall intercede with the Lord on their behalf.⁴⁷

This statement, attributed to Shenoute, can be interpreted as guaranteeing passage to heaven for the people who worshipped in the church or were buried in the monastic grounds. Such promises would have provided a powerful attraction for local pilgrims, who would in turn have boosted the monastic economy.

Another passage from the *Life of Shenoute* informs us that Martyrius – the *archimandrite* of the important Pachomian monasteries and later a venerated saint himself – came to visit Shenoute at least twice and, during those visits, declared him to be a prophet.⁴⁸ This passage can be read in two ways: either as a simple endorsement of Shenoute by a celebrated monastic leader, or as an acknowledgement of Shenoute's place above Martyrius in the local saintly hierarchy.

It is not just the *Life* that reports on the growing veneration of Shenoute and his influence at the White Monastery. Further evidence for pilgrimage is found in papyri that were kept in the monastic library which contained a liturgical calendar that dates to the eighth century. The papyrus mentions a number of saints whose feast days were commemorated in the White Monastery.⁴⁹ The calendar reveals a busy schedule with a total of 51 listed feast days. The venerated saints were, with

few exceptions, from the local region, most of them originating from the White Monastery or from the region of Akhmim. Each feast day had its own liturgical practice, hymns and psalms, most of which would have been a part of the internal liturgy of monastic worship. However, the evidence for non-monastic participation in some of these feast days is suggested by another papyrus recording a hymn with the title *On the Prophet Apa Shenoute* that according to MacCoull could have been sung at the White Monastery and suggests that the church was occasionally accessible to visitors.⁵⁰ The hymn compares Shenoute to Moses and recalls how 'He [Shenoute] laid the foundation of the church; all men upon earth, when they come to your monastery, marvel at that stone, for there is no mark on it.'⁵¹ The presence of non-monastics is also recorded in a ninth-century text that specifies which liturgy should be performed if, for example, the monastery was visited by a duke, a magistrate or another monastic leader.⁵²

I will draw attention to one final example of a textual reference to pilgrimage to the White Monastery, which is attested in a well-known and often discussed liturgical text known as *BN Copte 68*.⁵³ The text dates to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, but describes a rite that, according to Janet Timbie, took place until the twelfth century.⁵⁴ The modern title of the text is *The Rite for the Feast of the Desert of Apa Shenoute*.⁵⁵ It describes a ritual procession performed by the people of Panopolis to several sites in and near the White Monastery. The focal points of the procession were two churches. The first, a church named *Etrigamou*,⁵⁶ was located outside the monastic enclosure walls, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and has been interpreted as containing the bodily remains of Shenoute.⁵⁷ The second church has been identified as the White Monastery's main church.⁵⁸ The *Rite* describes a day-long procession, during which the participants moved from one station to the next.⁵⁹ The main stations will be discussed in relation to the archaeological remains.

In summary, even a brief survey of the written sources such as this suggests that visitation became a part of life in the White Monastery and its surrounding landscape at some stage after the death of Shenoute. Unfortunately, the textual sources do not refer to facilities that could have served the pilgrim's physical needs during their stay. Nor do the texts provide information on the number of pilgrims, the length of their visits, restrictions on who could visit the monastery, or to what extent the monastics engaged with outsiders. Similarly, the experience of visiting the monastery is left to our imaginations. The continuous use of the White Monastery through the centuries has to some extent obscured the late antique use of the site. Therefore most of these issues cannot be answered through an examination of the physical remains, but when viewed through the lens of visitation, the archaeology does yield information on some of the activities undertaken by pilgrims.

Pilgrimage to the White Monastery: Archaeological evidence

The archaeological remains of the White Monastery are best described as comprising several isolated clusters of architectural remains set within a sea of sand and debris and framed by the modern monastery. These 'archaeological

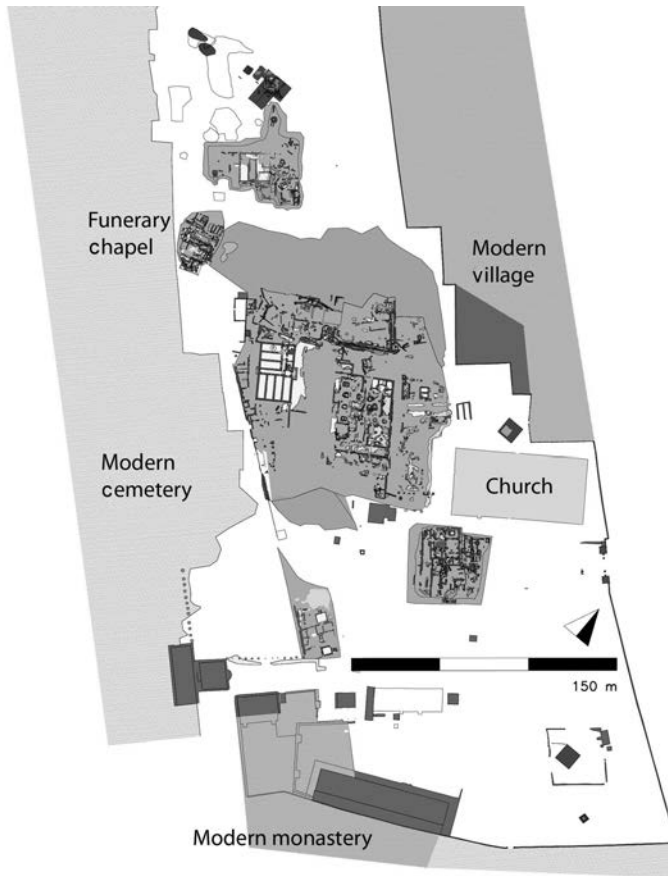


Figure 12.2 Survey map of the White Monastery showing relationship between the modern monastery and the archaeological site. © Yale Monastic Archaeological Project (South).

islands' include the monastic church built under Shenoute's leadership, along with five large areas of archaeological remains lying to the south, west and northwest of this church. These areas lie exposed as the result of the excavations by the SCA, while Petrie's work has long since been covered. My research elsewhere has revealed that the monastery took up some 75,000 m² thus placing it among the largest known monasteries in late antique Egypt.⁶⁰ Of this area, almost 29% has been excavated by past archaeological missions. The evidence for pilgrimage to the White Monastery is discussed within three categories: the main church, the funerary chapel and the logistics of pilgrimage (Figure 12.2).

Relics and baptism: The White Monastery church

Towering above the Nile Valley, the main church is located on the monastery's westernmost edge above a steep drop that separates the cultivation from the desert plateau. Measuring 75 by 36 m and with walls preserved to their full height of more than 13 m, it is among the largest churches from late antique Egypt and one of the few that are still standing. Constructed under Shenoute's leadership and funded by a benefaction from a certain Caesarius, son of Candidianus, it also stands as a testimony to the spiritual importance of the White Monastery in the fifth century.⁶¹ The size and position of the church means that it was visible from afar – not only did it serve as an imposing reminder of Christianity in the daily lives of the local villagers, it also greeted the visitors long before they arrived at the site. The archaeological record does not reveal how visitors entered the monastery, but comparative evidence from Kellia, St Epiphanius and St Simeon suggests a clear division between the space available to visitors and that restricted to monastic usage. The church itself was freestanding allowing circumambulation as well as direct access to the surrounding buildings. The six doorways that gave access to the church in Late Antiquity reveal a complex organisation with entrances designed perhaps to specific groups – e.g. clergy, monastics and visitors – as well for specific ritual purposes.

Entering the church from the west, it is comprised of a narthex, a nave and a tri-conch sanctuary flanked by side rooms to the north and south (Figure 12.3).⁶² In its current configuration, the tripartite sanctuary is dedicated to St George (north), St Shenoute (east) and to the Virgin Mary (south) although it is not possible to track the origin of this spatial division. The *Rite for the Feast of the Desert of Apa Shenoute* mentions that the procession venerated an icon of St George and

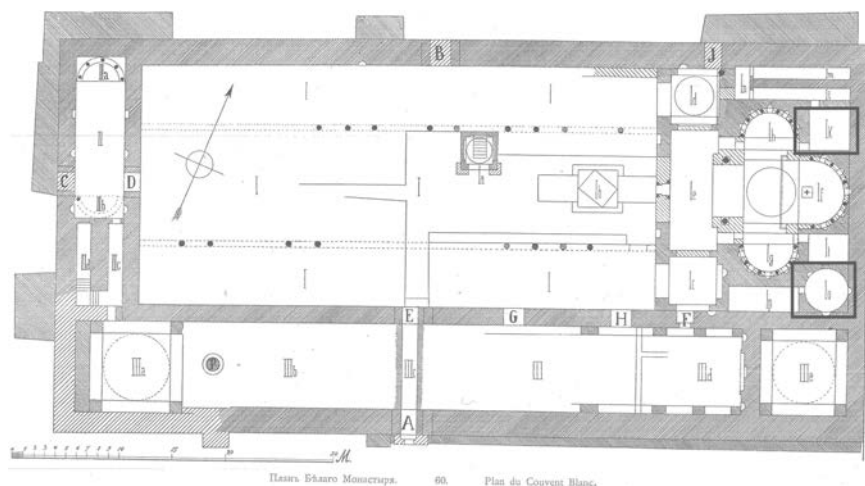


Figure 12.3 Map of the White Monastery church with emphasis on location of crypt, and the baptistry. Modified from Clarke 1912: Plate XLV.

a receptacle containing his relics.⁶³ According to Janet Timbie, the *Rite* refers to oil from the lamps at this shrine that was used for curing illness and remitting the sins of those who were anointed.⁶⁴ Timbie's account does not state whether the oil received its healing qualities from its proximity to the shrine or was in physical contact with the relics, as was the case in, for example, churches in the north Syrian Limestone Massif.⁶⁵ There, relics were kept in limestone reliquaries, with holes drilled at the top that allowed oil to pass through the interior cavity and escape through holes at the bottom after it had been in contact with the relics.⁶⁶ It is not indicated in either text or archaeology whether the oil was used on site or collected in containers and carried by the visitors to their homes.

Both textual and archaeological evidence suggest a further association with relics at the White Monastery church. From the north conch (dedicated to St George) a doorway gives access to the northern side room. From here, a subterranean crypt can be entered through a niche in the wall. The crypt consists of a vaulted room with a cavity in the south wall currently containing the bones of at least two individuals. Gaining access to the tiny crypt is both difficult and uncomfortable as it requires moving through a narrow sloping passage into the subterranean room. As such, the architectural layout implies that the crypt was not intended for regular visits. Instead, placing these bones in a location almost immediately below the altar seems to have served other purposes: to venerate commemorated individuals by the central location of their relics and to imbue the church with blessings via the presence of these individuals. Ann Marie Yasin argues that the association of altars with relics became increasingly important during Late Antiquity.⁶⁷ This development culminated at the second council of Nicaea (787), which prescribed that all altars should be associated with the physical remains of a saint. However, it is not clear how far this edict affected the anti-Chalcedonian community in Christian Egypt.

It is not known whose remains were buried in such a prominent position below the altar in the main church of the White Monastery – whether it was monastic leaders, benefactors, saints or martyrs. An entry on the patriarch Cyril I (1078–1092) in *The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* provides a list of relics in Egypt and notes that the White Monastery was host to the remains of the two apostles: Bartholomew and Simon the Zealot.⁶⁸ Although it is not possible to link this or the account of the healing oil at the shrine of St George to the physical remains of the church, it is important to note that the textual sources state – and the archaeological evidence suggests – that relics were kept and venerated in this church, although the nature of this veneration remains unknown.

The configuration of the southern rooms signifies a different set of rituals. Here, the southern aisle of the nave is connected to the south conch (dedicated to the Virgin Mary) through three rooms: the central one functioning as a baptistery. The baptistery consists of a circular room centred on an immersion tank with a staircase in its west and east ends. The architectural arrangement, which includes a room to either side of the baptistery, resembles the layout of the baptistery in the Great Basilica at the pilgrimage site of Abu Mena.⁶⁹ Grossmann suggested a ritual sequence corresponding with the Coptic rite of baptism and reflected by the

architectural layout, in which the first room, which was accessed from an exterior space, was used for undressing before the neophytes proceeded to be baptised. After the immersion, the neophytes were anointed with oil in the adjacent room, redressed and then admitted into the church space to participate in the service.

It seems reasonable to ask who was baptised in the church of the White Monastery. Did the baptistery serve visitors or was it reserved for new initiates into the monastic community? Baptism was certainly integral to pilgrimage at sites such as Abu Mena and Qal'at Sem'an, but such connection remains speculative at the White Monastery.

Venerating the saint: The funerary chapel

Located on the northwest border of the archaeological site, a tri-conch funerary chapel is the only other church thus far excavated on the site. The chapel was built in the sixth or seventh century, excavated by the SCA in 2002 and has recently been subjected to extensive re-examinations by the Yale Monastic Archaeological Project.⁷⁰ The two-part structure consists of the chapel itself (northern part) and a pillared hall (southern part) (Figure 12.4). The funerary chapel comprises a nave with two side aisles and a tri-conch sanctuary, similar in form to the main monastic church. A subterranean tomb that consists of two adjoining chambers is located underneath the sanctuary and accessed from the central part of the nave.

Recent conservation of the tomb's decorative programme has revealed new details that connect the tomb to Shenoute himself.⁷¹ The tomb was accessed via a few steep steps, which gave access to three rooms on a linear axis: a passageway, an antechamber and the burial chamber.⁷² The latter is located below the space where the chapel's altar would have stood.⁷³ The visual programme of the burial chamber is dominated by representation of paradise through a combination of geometric, floral and faunal images, but includes a single scene of standing figures. A painted inscription identifies the central figure as Apa Shenoute the *Archimandrite*. The painting's composition has prompted Bolman and colleagues to suggest that the tomb was intended for Shenoute himself – if not as his original resting place, then as a later receptacle for his remains.⁷⁴ A series of rooms just north of the church has been interpreted as a suite of additional tombs. They were constructed after the church building was completed and were perhaps intended as *ad sanctos* burials – located in close proximity to the saint himself.

The prolonged use of the church structure has resulted in a complete removal of all internal components of the tomb as well as of the church itself. This means that only parts of the architectural layout remain to indicate what ritual practices took place at the site. It is tempting to compare the description of the *Etrigamou* church with the physical remains of the funerary chapel. According to the *Rite*, the processions of pilgrims would enter the church and listen to a series of biblical readings followed by the reading of a sermon by Shenoute. Thereafter, the pilgrims would proceed to the place of the 'sea of Apa Shenoute', interpreted by Davis and Timbie as a repository for Shenoute's relics located below the altar of the church.⁷⁵ Finally, the pilgrims exited the church and circumambulated the building.⁷⁶ The

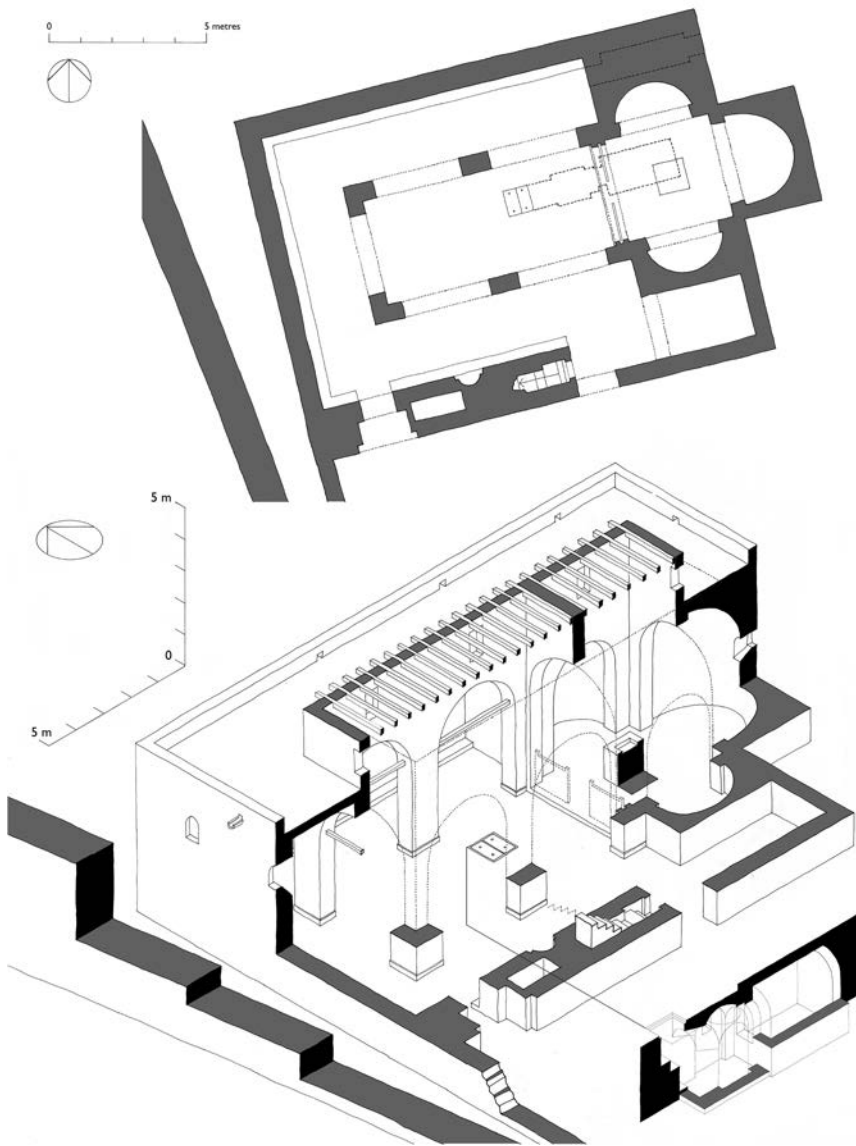


Figure 12.4 Map and isometric plan of the funerary chapel at the White Monastery. Drawing by Nicholas Warner. Bolman *et al.* 2010: fig. 3.

description of the physical location of the *Etrigamou* church, however, does not correlate with the location of the funerary chapel in the archaeological landscape of the White Monastery. Upon leaving the *Etrigamou* church, the procession would ‘descend down the mountain to “the monastery of our holy father Apa Shenoute”

where the pilgrims congregated at the “Church of the Virgin and St George”.⁷⁷ The funerary chapel and the main church are located on the same plateau just 175 m apart, as the crow flies. Even if the procession walked south or north around the walls of the monastery, the journey would be no longer than 650 m and would not require a descent. While it is, therefore, legitimate to note the convergence between the *Rite*’s description of the pilgrims’ route within the building and the layout of the structures within the chapel, there is no conclusive evidence which allows us to identify the church in the *Rite* as the surviving funerary chapel.

The logistics of pilgrimage: Housing and feeding the visitors

Visitors travelling from beyond the nearest urban centres would require board and lodging either within the monastery itself or in nearby settlements. Guesthouses are known from the monastic rules of Pachomius, which refer to houses located outside the monastery’s walls where prospective monks as well as visitors would stay. From the sixth century onwards, these guesthouses may also have housed pilgrims. The extramural location means that guesthouses are seldom found in the archaeological record as excavations tend to focus on the intramural remains. An exception, however, was found at the seventh-century monastery of Deir al-Bala’iza, some 30 km north of the White Monastery. Here, a structure consisting of several rooms on both sides of a central corridor was located immediately south of the entrance to the Monastery. At the tenth-century monastery of St Simeon near Aswan, the architectural layout reveals that a distinct part of the complex was dedicated to visitors.⁷⁸ This area was centred on a courtyard and comprised a stable and four small rooms that each contained three masonry beds, while a fifth room served as a kitchen. A large raised platform (17 by 4.5 m) was interpreted by Ugo Monneret de Villard as a sleeping place for poorer visitors. From here, the visitors had access to the main church, a chapel and a baptistery, but not to the remaining parts of the monastery.

Shenoute’s writings state that prospective monastics, tradesmen and visitors to the federation would stay in the gatehouse, which means that in the fifth century, the White Monastery would not have needed a separate guesthouse to accommodate such people. However, the changed focus on pilgrimage from the sixth or seventh century onwards could very well have resulted in a reconfiguration of the monastic landscape to accommodate this new practice. I will briefly introduce the excavated areas to the west and south of the main church considering which facilities could have been made available to the transient visitors.

The excavated area to the west of the church is organised around a large open courtyard. A well and extensive water installations lie to the north, a building which could be the monastic administration and food store (*diakonia*) to the west, and an enclosure containing a kitchen, as well as an area for food production and storage, to the east of the courtyard. The kitchen facilities contain, among other structures, ten bread ovens and attached boilers. Although these facilities were designed for the resident monastics, the number of ovens suggests that the kitchen could cater to large groups of people, while at the same time allowing production

to be adjusted depending on the number of people present. The area east of the enclosure is not well preserved, but it is possible to distinguish a pillared hall that has been interpreted as a refectory, which was located between the kitchen and the monastic church.

A similar densely built environment is found to the south of the church. Here, the main features are a building with a large pillared hall, framed by a thoroughfare and a narrow alley, along with a basin that is located in the northeast corner of the excavated area. The pillared hall resulted from substantial remodelling in the seventh century, when an open courtyard was transformed in order to support a second storey.

The semi-circular basin, flanked by two columns and located immediately south of the current entrance to the church, was entered via a limestone step. The layout, size and shape of the structure prompted Grossmann to suggest that it was a part of a bathing facility that pre-dated the construction of the monastery.⁷⁹ I agree with Grossmann's interpretation of the basin's function, but my analysis of the area's architectural stratigraphy carried out as a part of Yale's Monastic Archaeology Project (South) suggests that it was in fact constructed around the same time as the remodelling of the pillared hall in the seventh century. This remodelling took place at a time when the textual sources suggest that pilgrimage to the monastery had become an established practice. If the basin was indeed part of a monastic bathing facility, it is almost unique to Egyptian monasticism. The only other known examples of bathing facilities in a monastery in Egypt derives from St Simeon's, where water from the baths was used to flush the adjacent latrines, and from Bawit in a building that also contained a chapel.⁸⁰ Examples of monastic bathhouses are found in Palestine in, for example, the monastery of St Hilarion and in the Judean monastery of St Martyrius, but they are generally a rare occurrence.⁸¹ Importantly, Grossmann identified two public bathhouses within the ecclesiastical area in Abu Mena and suggested that the neophytes would bathe before they were baptised.⁸² Assuming a similar practice at the White Monastery, the location of the basin would allow an almost direct passage from the bathing facility into the church via its south entrance.⁸³

Conclusion

The textual sources and, to a lesser extent, the archaeological remains present in combination a case for pilgrimage to the White Monastery from the seventh and perhaps even sixth century onwards. The *Rite*, the hymn and the *Life* reveal that Shenoute was the main pull-factor, but also other ritual activities drew visitors to the site. These activities included, but were probably not limited to, baptism, healing and redemption from sins, as well as the veneration of relics and of several other saints and martyrs, primarily from the local region of Panopolis. The commemoration of the apostles Bartholomew and Simon and the relics associated with the cult of St George are important as they suggest a local competition for the attention of visitors. The eighth century liturgical calendar listing no less than 51 feast days of mostly local saints does support the notion of a religiously

active region. As do the further 21 monasteries that are known from textual and archaeological sources from the region of Panopolis – all but three were named after local saints or martyrs.

The texts do not give information on the logistics of accommodating pilgrims, and the nature of monastic life means that only rarely are traces found in the archaeological record. The lack of objects that can clearly be identified as associated with pilgrimage is problematic, but not uncommon. Studies of modern pilgrimage practice suggest that foodstuffs were commonly used in the exchange between visitor and shrine, a process that left no discernible traces among the archaeological remains.⁸⁴ The visitors were possibly based in temporary accommodation outside the walls of the White Monastery, but the kitchen facilities suggest that food preparation could be adjusted to the number of people present on site. The archaeological remains further reveal that bathing facilities were available: perhaps in preparation for baptism or serving visitors who stayed at the monastery for a longer period. The pillared hall southwest of the church could possibly also have accommodated visitors. At Abu Mena as well as St Simeon's the architectural design reveals a clear distinction in the quality of accommodation between the wealthy and the poorer visitors. It is possible but not documented that a similar distinction existed at the White Monastery, in which case the pillared building could have housed the visitors who could afford to stay in immediate proximity to the main church. Such analysis remains speculative owing to the poor preservation of the building and the lack of portable objects.

Finally, we should not forget that pilgrimage to the White Monastery is a living practice. The rich corpus of information that can be retrieved from studying the modern phenomenon of weekly visits as well as the annual festival of Shenoute is worth bringing into consideration when reconstructing the functional operation of the ancient site. An anachronistic transfer of the modern practice onto the ancient site should be avoided, but modern pilgrimage practice provides a heuristic tool, which can inform new interpretations of the archaeological remains and point towards fresh trajectories through which pilgrimage can be explored.⁸⁵

Notes

1 This chapter was written while I was a post-doctoral fellow in *The Emergence of Sacred Travel* project at Aarhus University. The study on the White Monastery results from part of my PhD research carried out under the White Monastery Project, directed by Stephen Davis and Gillian Pyke, Yale University. I am most grateful to Gillian Pyke, Stephen Davis, Luke Treadwell, Troels Myrup Kristensen and the anonymous reviewer who read draft versions of this text and provided insightful comments on its context. Heartfelt thanks to Stephen Davis, the team of the White Monastery Project, the Sohag department of the Ministry of State for Antiquities and the monks of the White Monastery. Also many thanks to the organisers for inviting me to participate in the *Excavating Pilgrimage* symposium and contribute to this publication. Figures 12.2 and 12.4 were reproduced with permission from Elizabeth Bolman, Nicholas Warner and Stephen Davis.

2 Bitton-Ashkelony 2005, 160–161; Davis 2008, 126–148; Gabra *et al.* 2001.

3 Frank 1998, 497–498; 2000.

- 4 Athanasius 2003.
- 5 Goehring 1999, 13.
- 6 Goehring 1993, 282; 2003, 440.
- 7 Goehring 2003, 445.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 443.
- 9 Deferrari 1964; Paphnutius 1993.
- 10 Goehring 2003, 443–444.
- 11 Judge 1977, 88.
- 12 Frank 2008, 30.
- 13 See Chitty 1966, 46–52 for an overview of the journeys of these famous travellers.
- 14 Russell and Ward 1981, 50.
- 15 Bagnall 2007, 13–14.
- 16 Papaconstantinou 2007.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 358.
- 18 Swanson 2010, 30.
- 19 Yasin and Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 20 Frankfurter 2005, 435; Montserrat 1998, 257.
- 21 Frankfurter 1998, 18.
- 22 See, for example, Blid 2012; Davis 2005; Hunter-Crawley 2012; Kristensen 2012.
- 23 See Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 24 See Yasin, this volume.
- 25 Davis 2015.
- 26 See Kristensen, this volume.
- 27 See Introduction, this volume.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Layton 2002, 26.
- 30 Bell 1983: 82; Layton 2002, 26; 2007, 47.
- 31 Emmel 2004, 4; Layton 2007, 45–46.
- 32 Emmel 2008, 33.
- 33 Bell 1983, 1.
- 34 See works by Kuhn, for example, 1956.
- 35 For an overview of the most significant sources see Timm 1984–2007, 601–625.
- 36 See, for example, Curzon 1955, 138–139.
- 37 Petrie 1908, 2, 13–15.
- 38 The White Monastery Federation Project was co-directed by Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, Elizabeth Bolman and Peter Sheehan. Stephen Davis is the executive director of Yale's Monastic Archaeological Project and Gillian Pyke is archaeological director. See Brooks, Hedstrom and Bolman 2012; Davis 2010.
- 39 Viaud 1979.
- 40 Timbie 1998, 415. See Bitton-Ashkelony 2005; Yasin 2009, 15–26 for attitudes towards pilgrimage in the fourth and fifth centuries.
- 41 Layton 2007, 65.
- 42 Zeretelli and Jernstedt 1925–1935, vol. 3, 48. See also Papaconstantinou 2007.
- 43 Behlmer 1998, 341–343.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 Lubomierski 2007.
- 46 Papaconstantinou 2012, 84.
- 47 Reproduced by Behlmer 1998, 367.
- 48 Behlmer 1998, 354, 356–357.
- 49 MacCoull 1998; Zanetti 1994.
- 50 MacCoull 1998, 410.
- 51 Kuhn and Tait 1996, 137–145.
- 52 MacCoull 1998, 404–405.
- 53 See, for example, Davis 2008, 114; Grossmann 2004; Timbie 1998; 2008.

- 54 Timbie 1998, 418.
- 55 See also Davis 2008, 114–125; Grossmann 2004.
- 56 An epithet of the Virgin Mary meaning without experience of marriage. Davis 2008, 116.
- 57 Davis 2008, 117; Timbie 1998, 432.
- 58 Davis 2008, 118.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 114.
- 60 Blanke 2014.
- 61 Grossmann *et al.* 2009, 169.
- 62 The medieval reconfiguration of the church involved the construction of a choir between the nave and the sanctuary.
- 63 Timbie 1998, 439.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 439.
- 65 Yasin 2009, 164–171.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 165–167.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 154.
- 68 Coquin and Meurice Martin 1991, 764.
- 69 Grossmann 1998, 283. See also Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 70 Bolman *et al.* 2010; 2011.
- 71 Bolman *et al.* 2010; Bolman *et al.* 2011.
- 72 Bolman *et al.* 2010, 456.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 455.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 458.
- 75 Davis 2008, 117; Timbie 1998, 432.
- 76 Davis 2008, 117.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 118.
- 78 Monneret de Villard 1927, 14–24.
- 79 Grossmann *et al.* 2004, 374–375; 2009, 184–186.
- 80 Grossmann 2009.
- 81 Elter and Hassoune 2008; Hirschfeld 1992, 44.
- 82 Grossmann 1998, 292.
- 83 For discussions of baths at pilgrimage sites in Egypt see several articles in Boussac *et al.* 2009.
- 84 Viaud 1979. This practice can also be observed at the White Monastery.
- 85 See, for example, Viaud 1979.

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13 Excavating Meriamlik

Sacred space and economy in late antique pilgrimage

Troels Myrup Kristensen

From its earliest history, Christian pilgrimage has been preoccupied with the practice of excavation. Several scholars have even gone as far as to suggest that early Christian archaeology began with Helena's discovery of the "True Cross" in Jerusalem in AD 326.¹ The allure of excavating relics also continues to fascinate up to the present day. In 2006, the Vatican thus announced the discovery of a sarcophagus in Rome's S. Paolo fuori le Mura that the media widely speculated to contain the earthly remains of the apostle Paul.² While Helena's discovery constitutes a formative stage in the development of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, modern archaeological approaches to Christian pilgrimage extend far beyond the search for relics, as also discussed in other contributions to this volume. This chapter will accordingly propose some ways in which a broader palette of archaeological approaches can shed light on one particular pilgrimage shrine, Meriamlik (also known as Hagia Thekla in Greek or Ayatekla in Turkish), located in modern south-central Turkey (Figure 13.1).

Meriamlik was dedicated to the female protomartyr Thekla and developed over the course of the fourth century to become one of the most important pilgrimage shrines in late antique Asia Minor. According to Christian tradition, Thekla was born in Ikonion (modern Konya) where she was recruited as a female disciple of Paul, and the two travelled to various cities in the Roman East. For the latter part of her life, she is believed to have lived at Meriamlik, located outside Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos (modern Silifke), a regional centre in the Roman province of Isauria. Thekla's popularity was especially strong among women to whom she became an example of piety and virtue.³ She frequently appeared in Christian art, and artefacts such as pilgrimage flasks bearing her image flanked by wild beasts attest to her importance both in Asia Minor and Egypt.⁴ The archaeological remains at Meriamlik allow us to consider a number of other important aspects, such as economy and the different ways in which the spaces and buildings of the sanctuary were put to use to provide different experiences and services to pilgrims. Meriamlik, now completely in ruins, boasts several churches and a range of auxiliary buildings that offer an opportunity to explore the different activities that were part of the visit to a late antique destination of pilgrimage in the eastern Mediterranean (Figure 13.2).



Figure 13.1 Location of Meriamlik in the eastern Mediterranean (courtesy of Martin Gamache, Alpine Mapping Guild).

Meriamlik: History and archaeology

The role of Meriamlik in the early stories of Thekla was limited, and the development of the sanctuary as a pilgrimage destination required some careful strategic manoeuvring on behalf of its staff. From the second century onwards, Thekla's connection to Meriamlik had thus been expounded through both oral and literary works that circulated among Christian communities.⁵ These works emerged from the tradition of the late second-century apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thekla*,⁶ and developed further with the *Life and Miracles of Thekla*, probably written (or compiled) in the middle of the fifth century by an anonymous author who had intimate knowledge of Meriamlik.⁷ Whereas Seleukeia and Meriamlik are virtually absent in the former, the latter texts attest to Thekla's miraculous powers and interventions in the lives of those who visited her sanctuary. They are thus highly revelatory of several aspects of the cult, many of which have been explored in recent work by Stephen Davis and Scott Johnson, even if both as examples of

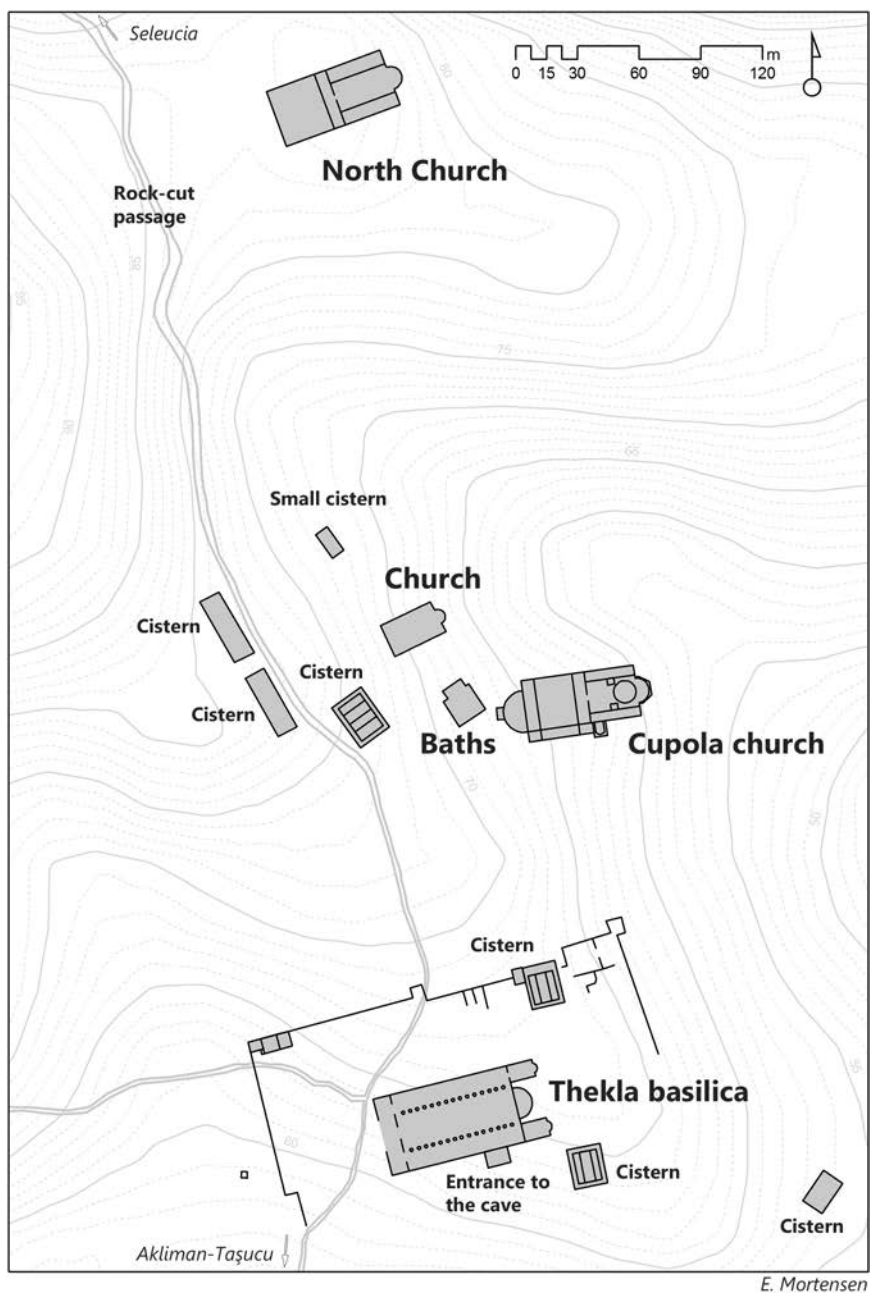


Figure 13.2 Map of Meriamlik (after Herzfeld and Guyer 1930, 2).

hagiographic literature also raise considerable problems of interpretation.⁸ From the accounts of visitors, such as the female pilgrim Egeria's famous testimony of her visit in May 384, it is clear that Meriamlik had by then developed into a destination of international repute that could be visited on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, attesting to the sanctuary's success in extending its catchment area beyond a predominantly local reach.⁹

Over time, Meriamlik accumulated considerable wealth, including an assortment of different exotic birds given by pilgrims and kept in gardens at the site that have been interpreted as *paradeisoi* in the Near Eastern tradition.¹⁰ Late in the fifth century, the sanctuary even received imperial beneficence. In response to Thekla's help in re-establishing his rule after the revolt of Basiliskos (475–476), the emperor Zeno became the patron of a massive overhaul of the sanctuary.¹¹ The focal point of the project that he sponsored was an enormous three-nave basilica, known in the scholarly literature as the Thekla basilica and seated at the centre of a large *temenos* wall, to which we shall return in more detail below (Figure 13.2). It replaced an earlier and less monumental structure. Although this new basilica was massive – in fact it is the largest church in Cilicia – it was only one part of the larger expansion of the sanctuary during this period in which healing pilgrimage thrived in several other parts of the eastern Mediterranean, such as Abu Mena in Egypt and Qal'at Sem'an in Syria.¹² Numerous other buildings, including several cisterns and baths, are equally important to understand the nature of the site's economy and the experience of the pilgrims.

From the seventh to the fourteenth century, there are only occasional textual references to Meriamlik and its cult of Thekla.¹³ As Egeria already had noted, the sanctuary was exposed to attacks by Isaurians, and the *Miracles* contain further references to such raids. Yet the sources indicate that the cult was still active at some level during the time of the fall of the Armenian rule over Cilicia in 1375.¹⁴

The site's modern scholarly history began with visits by Western travellers. Already in the nineteenth century, visitors reported that the site was suffering greatly from stone robbing. Then in 1907, parts of Meriamlik were excavated by Samuel Guyer and a young Ernst Herzfeld, better known for his later work at Persepolis.¹⁵ This phase of fieldwork occurred at a time when the disciplines of art history and early Christian archaeology were beginning to discover Asia Minor as an important new field of study.¹⁶ Yet in spite of the site's importance, this single campaign remains the only archaeological fieldwork that has been undertaken at Meriamlik to this day. Thus, since the publication of Guyer and Herzfeld's fieldwork in 1930, the site has received limited archaeological interest apart from more specific discussions of the site's churches, and re-assessments of other notable features, such as the cisterns, have only recently appeared.¹⁷ The monuments of Meriamlik were already in a poor state of preservation at the time of the excavations, and the situation has only worsened since, due to the lack of proper conservation and growing urbanization in the area. It is in short a site under threat, and one that would benefit greatly from more systematic investigation.¹⁸ While the site's early modern name of Meriamlik, simply meaning the place of the Holy Mary, alluded only to its Christian origins in very vague terms, it has in recent years opened as

an archaeological park, and the link to Thekla has been re-established through the currently used name of Ayatekla.¹⁹

The state of the sources as outlined here has resulted in a curious state of affairs in which Meriamlik exists almost as if it were two places: The first is the textual Meriamlik that was described by Egeria and the author of the *Life and Miracles*; the second is the archaeological Meriamlik that mostly dates to the late fifth century and after, a period to which we have considerably less textual evidence to contextualize the material remains. The two Meriamliks have proven rather difficult to reconcile, and it is not possible here to provide a detailed discussion of the considerable problems that relate to identifying particular architectural features known from the textual sources.²⁰ Instead, I will explore how the archaeology (as fragmentary as it is) may contribute to a more holistic understanding of the site. We will begin with how the sanctuary was defined in space, a crucial feature of its architectural layout, as well an important source to understanding how it was approached and experienced by the pilgrims.

Walls, boundaries and presence: Meriamlik as sacred space

Following anthropological models, this section discusses how the spaces of Meriamlik were conceptualized by the pilgrims, understood in physical terms through the use of walls and boundaries, as well as how these came to be represented.²¹ The Thekla basilica is encircled by a wall, measuring 180 x 60 m and dating to sometime before 384 (Figure 13.2).²² Egeria's reference to this precinct wall firmly establishes it as an early feature of how the sacred space of Thekla's sanctuary was defined, even if it appears to have been at least partially rebuilt in later periods. A *megiston temenos* is mentioned by the sixth-century church historian Evagrius in reference to Zeno's patronage at Meriamlik, and the area within the wall is thus sometimes referred to as the *temenos*.²³ Although it is not entirely clear if Evagrius here specifically refers to the wall around the main basilica or the sanctuary as such, the passage does provide evidence for a conceptual border in the spatial definition of Thekla's presence. The preserved wall, however, has mostly been discussed in functional terms as part of the sanctuary's defenses against raiders. Indeed, the location of three cisterns inside the *temenos* and towers on the walls added to its fortress-like feel, and scholars have been keen to point to its defensive function (not dissimilar to the Justinianic fortress at St Catherine's Monastery), especially when taking the notorious Isaurian raiders that are known to have been active in the region in Late Antiquity into account.²⁴

Yet the precinct wall also provides important evidence of how the sanctuary was conceptualized in spatial terms, as well as how Thekla's presence was mediated within it.²⁵ Most importantly, it severely restricted access for all visitors to the most sacred part of Thekla's sanctuary. Entry was by a gateway that narrowed visibility of the activities that took place on the inside. The precinct wall emphasized the experience of arrival in a particularly important place, as has previously been discussed in relation to, for example, Qal'at Sem'an where the ascent of the pilgrims up to the sanctuary was structured by means of several monumental archways.²⁶ In

other studies of sacred space, it has been pointed out that such entrances were particularly important and could constitute a liminal zone between different spheres of sacrality. There are thus obvious symbolic repercussions of the wall in terms of access, and it provides evidence of a concern to both visually and physically demarcate Thekla's presence within her sanctuary at large. We may also note that very large congregations of people could be housed within the open *temenos* surrounding the church – as such, it was a suitable venue for some of the orations that were part of the festival celebrating Thekla, as described in *Mir.* 41. In this miracle, the author, who was a trained orator himself, specifically points out that a feature called the *ambo* (and thus presumably a speaker's platform of some kind) was located outside the church, indicating that on certain occasions, services were held under the open sky.

The precinct wall around the Thekla basilica was not the only boundary that defined the sanctuary as sacred space. A row of large ashlar on the east side of the *wadi* provides evidence of an outer wall that may have encircled the entirety of the sanctuary's churches and buildings (Figure 13.3). Traces of this wall are also to be found to the west of the rock-cut passage. If a full circuit originally existed, it has not survived, which in itself is not surprising given that the blocks were readily suitable for re-use.²⁷ Unfortunately, the fragments that do survive have not been dated, which complicates efforts to ascertain the chronological development of the different boundaries. Which of the two walls came first? Were they jointly conceived, or did they only develop gradually? Although we cannot presently answer



Figure 13.3 Remains of the outer precinct wall at Meriamlik.

Photo: author.

these questions, the outer wall provided further security in times of trouble and turned Meriamlik into a city of its own and separated the site into different zones in which the saint's presence could be mediated in distinctive ways. Similar to the inner precinct wall, the function of the outer wall would have been defensive, but it added an additional layer of control of movement and access into Meriamlik. Again, the *Miracles* provide evidence of such control on a more general basis, as there were clear expectations of what constituted acceptable behaviour within Thekla's sanctuary (for example in *Mir.* 34). The textual sources thus provide evidence of a conceptual boundary that defined social conduct within the zones where Thekla was most present. How the outer wall relates to the rock-cut passage through which pilgrims arrived from Seleukeia is unfortunately unclear.²⁸ Yet the passage constitutes in itself another aspect of how movement and access to Meriamlik was carefully structured.

It is important to note that in the wider context of the cult of the saints, boundaries of the kind described here were perceived as permeable, and the presence of Thekla was by no means strictly defined by the precinct wall(s) around the sanctuary and the passages through them. The *Miracles* give important insights into the character of her presence both inside and outside Meriamlik, as it was conceived by the author. Although the architects of Thekla's sanctuary clearly made significant claims about her presence at the site in order to attract pilgrims from afar, the textual tradition made it clear that the saint was free to move wherever she wished. This allowed her to connect with other communities in the region and expanded her presence in all directions from Meriamlik. An intriguing story in the *Miracles* thus points to the fluid nature of Thekla's presence and informs us of the transfer of her cult to Dalisandos, an unidentified town that is generally assumed to have been located northwest of Seleukeia in the Kalykadnos river valley (*Mir.* 26).²⁹ The city is described as obscure and only a shadow of its former self before it was blessed by Thekla, and subsequently became her second-most important sanctuary. This act of *renovatio* in effect turned Thekla into the town's re-founder.³⁰ The *Miracles* describe the natural environment of the Dalisandos sanctuary as a place where pilgrims would have picnics and where the sick are cured just by visiting: It has "numerous trees, lofty, thick, abounding in blossoms and fruit, and there are many lovely springs, with very cold water, gushing out from under every plant and every rock, so to speak, flowing and coursing all around her church" (*Mir.* 26.3, trans. Johnson). Thekla's presence is punctuated temporally as she visits from Meriamlik on an annual basis during her festival. The story points to the dynamic character of Thekla's presence, as it could be imagined by the author of the *Miracles*, as well as the careful construction of a Christian topography in the vicinity of Seleukeia that revolved around different concepts of the saint's presence.

Approaching the sacred economy of Meriamlik

We will now turn our attention to the functions of particular buildings and spaces of Meriamlik as well as how the contours of the sacred economy of Thekla's sanctuary can be studied by means of architecture and material culture along with

consideration of the textual sources.³¹ An underlying question in this discussion will be how the different aspects of the pilgrimage economy influenced the layout, structure and experience of the site itself. In a study of ancient Israel, Roland Boer defines the term sacred economy as “a system in which the economy operates and is understood in terms of the sacred rather than the political”.³² Arguably, the economy of any late antique pilgrimage site, including Meriamlik, operated in such terms. Boer furthermore uses the term “temple-city complex” to describe the crucial relationship between city and temple in the Near Eastern context. Although this is less applicable in our case, Meriamlik’s location, just 2 km outside of Seleukeia, made it both dependent and independent of the larger civic community, which was also the seat of a bishop. Given the state of the archaeological sources, the following discussion has an exploratory character, but will nonetheless allow us to extend the investigation of sacred economies beyond relics and pilgrimage flasks, two defining groups of material culture in the study of late antique pilgrimage.³³ Pilgrimage formed an integral part of the sacred economy that in turn can be divided into smaller components. What follows is an initial exploration of these components based on the admittedly rather meagre archaeological record and the similarly incomplete textual evidence.

Connectivity and catchment

Firstly, the sacred economy of Meriamlik may be assessed in terms of a geographical macro-perspective by investigating its place in contemporary infrastructure as well as how it was connected to other regions of the late antique world.³⁴ The sanctuary was situated at a nodal point in the road network that connected east and west by means of traffic that came from Syria along the Mediterranean coast, as well as north and south, given that it was an important place of trans-shipment and was situated close to the Mediterranean harbour at Holmoi. Egeria in fact throws light in passing on the convenient location of the site, stating that “since it was so close [from Tarsus], we were very glad to be able to make the extra journey there”. The ease of access was also a factor in the decision to choose Seleukeia as the location of the church council in 359.³⁵ Holmoi was furthermore an important trading post with Cyprus to which the region of Cilicia historically had held close ties.³⁶ The sanctuary’s location, only 9 km from the coast, is very likely to have significantly contributed to its prominence. Meriamlik’s economic development was thus tied to its location within a broader infrastructural and economic network.

The wide geographical appeal of Thekla’s cult is evoked directly in some of her *Miracles*: In *Mir.* 28, we are told in general terms that there are witnesses to Thekla’s miracles across the whole of Asia Minor.³⁷ The extent of her reach is further extended in *Mir.* 10, where her powers are described as stretching beyond the Pillars of Herakles (Gibraltar),³⁸ clearly a geographical trope, as well as in *Mir.* 12, when Thekla casually remarks that she is on her way to Macedonia to help a woman in danger, a journey that alludes to the activities of Paul in Acts 16:9.³⁹ These carefully crafted stories could suggest to the reader that the

sanctuary had a large international catchment area from which many followed in the footsteps of Egeria who had come all the way from the Western Mediterranean, most likely France.

However, Egeria may be a somewhat special case, and indeed the main goal of her journey was not Meriamlik but rather the Holy Land and Egypt. The connectivity of the sanctuary as seen through the lens of the named individuals and groups in *Miracles* indeed maps a somewhat smaller and rather less cosmopolitan world synthesized here in Table 13.1 that lists cases where the specific origin of a particular pilgrim at Meriamlik is mentioned.⁴⁰ There is evidence of visits from *metropoleis*, such as Constantinople and Antioch (one each), as well as the overseas destination of Cyprus (twice), but most of the places explicitly mentioned are located in Isauria and Cilicia, and thus rather closer to Seleukeia, such as Aigai (twice), the site of an important sanctuary of Asklepios in Cilicia, Tarsus to the northeast (three times), Eirenoupolis to the west (three times), Claudiopoli (modern Mut, northwest of Seleukeia), Olba (in the highlands above Seleukeia) and so on. The most frequently mentioned place of origin is unsurprisingly Seleukeia, which features in five miracles. Even so, travel to Meriamlik from many of these locations would still have taken several days each way, and as such would have required some preparation and expense.

The evidence of the *Miracles* gives us important information about the text's intended audience and suggests that it was concerned with compiling miracles that had a closely identifiable, "local" feel, as well as others that built on biblical topoi and geographical tropes. Tying the miracles to local individuals (with genealogies that may have been known or at least sounded plausible to readers and, just as importantly, listeners) contributed to the overall credibility of the text, a feature that the author was keen to emphasize throughout the work. Whether this evidence gives us any real sense of the visitors who actually visited Meriamlik may

Table 13.1 Origins of pilgrims attested in the *Miracles*.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Mir.</i>	<i>Name(s)</i>
Aigai	9, 39	Menodoros, Isokasios
Antioch	17	Leontios
Claudiopolis	14	Hypsistios
Constantinople	16	Ambrosios
Cyprus	15, 37	unnamed men
Dalisandos	26	whole town
Eirenoupolis	33, 34, 35	Orention and unnamed man, two unnamed men, Pappos and Aulerios
Ketis	19	Bassiane
Olba	24	unnamed boy
Seleukeia	18, 23, 27, 38, 40	unnamed woman, Pausikakos, Alypios, Aretarchos
Selinous	27	whole town
Tarsus	18, 29, 39	unnamed woman, crowds for the festival, Eudokios

be an entirely different matter, and it is a moot point if we can deduce any kind of meaningful profile of the pilgrims that actually visited Thekla's sanctuary based on it. Our knowledge would be greatly enhanced if more systematic archaeological study of Meriamlik that included small finds and pottery had been undertaken. Such finds would constitute a very different and more complete source to understanding the sanctuary's connectivity and the origins of its pilgrims. However, at present, we must turn to other evidence to explore more specific aspects of Meriamlik's sacred economy. Inevitably, this involves moving to the micro-perspective of the monuments on the ground.

Ritual architecture, relics and healing

Even in their ruinous state, the most monumental archaeological remains at Meriamlik are the site's two main churches, the Thekla basilica and the so-called cupola church. These monuments have received the brunt of scholarly attention, not least because of the evidence for possible imperial involvement in their construction, as discussed above. Two other churches have been identified, but these are less well preserved and have subsequently received less attention. As centres of ritual activities at the site, the Thekla basilica and the cupola church played an important role in attracting pilgrims to Meriamlik in the first place. As such, they can also be considered to be the economic hubs of the sanctuary. Rather than providing a full overview of the layout and chronology of the two churches, the following discussion attempts to shed light on their use as ritual architecture, by which I mean their significance as frameworks of ritual action.

Of central importance here is the basilica of Thekla that was built over the cave where the saint, at least according to one tradition, had lived for part of her life.⁴¹ Except for the southern part of the apse, very little of this basilica church remains standing. The 1907 excavations mainly consisted of a few test trenches, and several aspects of the church's layout and plan remain controversial, not least the relationship between the fifth-century church visible today and its fourth-century predecessor that was seen by Egeria. The internal arrangement is also problematic, and it is very difficult to make any interpretations of the relationship between architecture and ritual inside the basilica. The exceptional size of the church, originally some 81 m long and 43 m wide, is clear enough, however, and is an indication of the imperial patronage that the sanctuary received, as are the marble capitals and the mosaic fragments uncovered by Guyer and Herzfeld.⁴²

As discussed earlier, access to the Thekla basilica was strictly controlled by means of the precinct wall around it, and orations were held outside it during the festival of Thekla. Apart from the defensive and symbolic aspects of the precinct wall already discussed, it underlined the special wealth of this particular church that dominated the southern part of Thekla's sanctuary. As the churches outside the wall would have been more exposed and vulnerable during raids, the Thekla basilica is likely to have been where the most precious artefacts in its possession would have been stored. This may help us in understanding some aspects of the basilica's architecture, such as the two side-chapels located on each side of the

apse in the eastern part of the basilica. It has previously been suggested that the chapels held some sort of relationship to the martyrium described by Egeria,⁴³ but they could also have been designed to hold relics of some description. The smaller side-chapels, to which access was through the aisles of the church, would certainly have provided two intimate spaces (each measuring 11.4 x 8.8 m) suitable for the viewing of relics, while also being in close proximity to the altar.⁴⁴ In this context, it is worth remembering that while the sanctuary is generally described as having no relics, one fifth- or sixth-century version of the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* that offers a competing vision of Thekla as a female hermit rather than the city protector that we encounter in the *Miracles* claims that when Thekla disappeared underground, she left behind her veil (*maphorion*), thus leaving a valuable relic that would have been kept somewhere in the sanctuary, although the location is not specified.⁴⁵ The story suggests that there were divergent traditions and memories at Meriamlik than those trumpeted by the *Life and Miracles* and which were centred on the notion of relics. It is also possible that the side-chapels could have housed some of the other precious objects that are described in the *Miracles*, such as the crosses dedicated to her.⁴⁶ The side-chapels should thus not only be seen as examples of provincial architecture but also as integral parts in the overall design and conceptualization of the church as a space for ritual.⁴⁷

The cave church beneath the Thekla basilica is widely believed to be the oldest part of the sanctuary, and it offers a rather different architectural framework for ritual than the large open space of the basilica above and its adjoining *temenos*.⁴⁸ It measures approximately 18 x 12 m. Efforts were made by the sanctuary's architects to connect the cave church with the Thekla basilica in quite intriguing ways, as recently pointed out by Ann Marie Yasin.⁴⁹ Whereas physical access was by means of a set of stairways located on the south side of the church, a light shaft thus connected martyrium and basilica, at least visually. It may also be noted that the two staircases allowed for easier circulation through the martyrium, furthermore suggesting that pilgrims followed a particular path through the cave church (Figure 13.2). The cave church provided pilgrims with a more intimate encounter with Thekla and constituted an important space in which her presence could be made manifest in rituals.

The other key aspect of Thekla's cult was healing, which calls for consideration of the cupola church that measures 78 x 35 m including the fore-courts.⁵⁰ This is situated 160 m north of the Thekla basilica, outside the protective barrier of the inner precinct wall, and this may be an important clue for us to identify the function of this particular church that was then clearly not designed in order to hold precious relics or treasures. The cupola church is roughly contemporary with the Thekla basilica, and they may have been designed as a pair but with rather different aims in mind.⁵¹ The masonry and opus sectile floor in the church match those of the nearby bath, possibly indicating that they were jointly constructed.⁵² Discussions of the cupola church have again mostly been devoted to typology and its architectural reconstruction, not least the question of whether the church was domed or not, based on comparisons with the much better preserved East Church at Alahan. This issue cannot be solved here, but the complex

architecture of the cupola church does suggest a much more multifaceted use, not least in comparison with the Thekla basilica that has a more “straight” and regular layout (at least as it is presently reconstructed on the basis of the relatively sparse archaeological findings).

In contrast to the enormous cavern of the Thekla basilica, the cupola church offers several intimate spaces dedicated to single-purpose use. Of special interest is the southern side-chamber which has been interpreted as a baptistery or as housing a miraculous healing bath.⁵³ The porticos around the atrium furthermore suggest that this could have been where healing, possibly even incubation, took place. The sigma courtyard that opened up into the atrium has been compared with palatial architecture and thus seen as another indication that this church, similar to the Thekla basilica, was the object of imperial patronage,⁵⁴ but we may point out that we find a similar architectural layout in the case of the southern hemicycle at Abu Mena that has been interpreted as a place where the sick who had come to the saint would be accommodated and healed.⁵⁵ We know that incubation was part of the cult of Thekla from *Mir.* 12, which describes how the author slept in the church and experienced a vision of the saint during the night.⁵⁶ These night visions constituted the standard form of epiphany at Meriamlik.⁵⁷

The economy of movement: Production, markets and cisterns

Even if the majority of scholarly attention has focused on Meriamlik’s churches, the auxiliary structures that are scattered throughout the site are equally important to understand other aspects of the sanctuary’s sacred economy, such as patterns of movement, the places of economic exchange and the nature of temporary accommodation for pilgrims. The large open area between the *temenos* and cupola church would, for example, have been a very suitable spot for the kind of markets or fairs that were an important part of the experience of visiting the sanctuary (Figure 13.2). In their approach to the Thekla basilica, pilgrims passed directly through this area, and indeed in *Mir.* 42, we learn that miraculous soap was sold at the gate. We find a parallel for this particular spatial arrangement at Abu Mena and the so-called “Pilgrims’ Court” that was placed right in front of the main church complex; this court was, however, more monumentalized with built-up shops rather than the kind of more simple stalls that we have to envision at Meriamlik (at least on the basis of the currently available archaeological evidence).⁵⁸ The soap itself obviously was produced somewhere, but we currently do not have the archaeological data necessary to determine whether such production was based at Meriamlik or Seleukeia, for instance. Other products that would have been central to the sacred economy of Meriamlik are mentioned in the *Miracles*, such as holy oil claimed to have been produced by the saint herself. Even filth scraped off the floor of Thekla’s chamber could be a sacred commodity, as we learn in *Mir.* 18.⁵⁹

Other evidence for the large numbers of pilgrims relates to the supply of water. Thekla is several times in the *Miracles* recounted as making water miraculously



Figure 13.4 Cistern west of the cupola church, Meriamlik.

Photo: author.

appear. The large cisterns are indeed among the most characteristic features of the site and one that offers a good indication of the size of the hospitality industry there, but also how Thekla came to hold this particular epithet (Figure 13.4).⁶⁰ At least one of the cisterns can be related to Zeno's building programme by means of datable brickstamps.⁶¹ The cisterns inside the inner precinct wall may have been particularly important in the provision of holy water (*hagiasma*), although they clearly also served more practical functions.⁶² The cisterns are furthermore likely to tell us something about patterns of movement within the site as well as the location of the temporary accommodation that would have been required during festivals and fairs. The cisterns cluster around the main processional way that ran through the site, indicating that this was where most of the accommodation and services were provided to pilgrims. Similarly, several baths were located in different parts of the sanctuary, pointing to the aspects of healing that would have been available to pilgrims.

The production and consumption of text by means of reading, writing and oratory was a particularly important feature of Thekla's cult. Unfortunately, we do not have any archaeological evidence for a library where texts could be consulted and copied. It is likely, however, that both libraries and scriptoria were incredibly important to the sacred economy of Meriamlik, not least in the sense that they helped promote the ideology of sacred travel that was required in order

to turn Thekla's sanctuary into a destination of pilgrimage. For example, in the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, Thekla's trials and tribulations take the shape of a travel narrative, taking her from her hometown of Ikonion to Antioch as well as on aimless walkabouts in search of Paul. This journey in turn became a model of both ministry and pilgrimage to the site of Meriamlik.⁶³ The production and circulation of Thekla literature is as such another important aspect of the sanctuary's sacred economy, even if it is for now one that is poorly understood in archaeological terms.

Burials

One important aspect of Meriamlik's sacred economy remains for us to consider. The site's importance as a pilgrimage destination also made it an attractable site for burial. Graves are thus found in several locations, and *arcosolia* graves are, for example, found in the rock-cut passage that facilitated access to the sanctuary from Seleukeia (Figure 13.5).⁶⁴ These graves demonstrate that the spaces through which the living moved were also the spaces where it was especially desirable to be buried, which is a practice that of course had a very long history in the ancient world.⁶⁵ Nearby sites, such as Korykos, provide further evidence of such roadside burials in the vicinity of churches.



Figure 13.5 Arcosolia graves lining the rock-cut passage into Meriamlik.

Photo: author.

At Meriamlik, burial in the presence of the saint was desirable but could in some cases attract contention and controversy, as is clear from *Mir.* 30. In this miracle, Thekla

exhorted him [the bishop Maximos] that he should not have been so disdainful of her church as to introduce into it the foul smell of burials and tombs. There was nothing in common, she said, between tombs and houses of prayer, unless someone who has died is not really dead but *is alive to God*, and is worthy to dwell together under the same roof as the martyrs, such as the divine Symposios, or Samos, the famous holy man, or someone else of the same quality as they!⁶⁶

This passage gives us some insight into the complicated politics of burial and its relationship to the economy of sacrality that are difficult to reconstruct on the basis of the archaeology alone. From the passage, we also learn that there were tombs in the south aisle of the Thekla basilica.⁶⁷ The excavations in 1907 furthermore uncovered a grave in the apsis, and later work has located further burials in the cave church.⁶⁸

In comparison with other early Christian sites, such as for example Salona in Croatia, burials inside the churches were relatively rare.⁶⁹ The main area of late antique burials at Meriamlik was thus the hill above the Thekla basilica where today sarcophagi with Christian motifs and inscriptions are scattered in large quantities (Figure 13.6). These suggest that burials would have been a constituent part



Figure 13.6 Lid of Christian sarcophagus in the necropolis above Meriamlik.

Photo: author.

of Meriamlik's sacred economy, comparable to other saintly sites where churches and monastic communities offered rituals and prayers to ensure the commemoration of the deceased.⁷⁰ Some of these tombs are furthermore located on high ground, overlooking both Thekla's sanctuary and the Mediterranean, suggesting that a prominent location in the landscape was particularly prized.

Conclusion: Meriamlik and the archaeology of late antique pilgrimage

The aspects of Meriamlik's sacred economy that have been discussed here each contributed in different ways to a considerable accumulation of wealth, some of which has an archaeological footprint on the ground, such as the many marble columns that are scattered across the site. Based on his reading of the *Miracles*, Dagron identified three main types of treasure at Thekla's sanctuary that, however, remain invisible to us: gold and silver coins, liturgical vessels and objects, and finally various votives dedicated by pilgrims, such as crosses.⁷¹ In *Mir.* 13, we hear of offerings presented by a general named Satornilos that were seen by the author, suggesting that they were on display in the sanctuary. Without further excavation, the majority (if not all) of this is lost to us. Many of the questions put forward in this chapter thus cannot be answered fully on the basis of the currently available evidence. Yet in spite of the fact that many questions remain, the archaeological and textual sources at Meriamlik do present an image of a successful and affluent sacred economy that we can begin to flesh out through closer consideration of the sanctuary's individual features and its use of space. Together these elements of a sacred economy contributed to the development of Meriamlik as a pilgrimage sanctuary whose influence at least in the fourth to sixth centuries extended far beyond its immediate local environment.

While this paper has focused on Meriamlik as a case study, it does provide some useful pointers for future directions in how archaeology and text may be combined to shed light on both sacred space and the nature of the sacred economy in late antique sacred pilgrimage, particularly in developing new approaches to a fragmentary material. Understanding the full range of economic activities and ritual experiences provided to pilgrims by Christian pilgrimage shrines thus constitute an important aspect of an archaeological approach to sacred travel and movement in the context of Late Antiquity.

Notes

For helpful comments on this chapter, I am grateful to Louise Blanke, Ina Eichner, Wiebke Friese and an anonymous reader. I discuss other aspects of Meriamlik, such as the sanctuary's use of landscape and its relationship to the city of Seleukeia, in Kristensen 2016.

1 Frend 1996, 1–5. On early Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, see Hunt 1984. All the following dates are AD, except otherwise noted.

2 Humphries 2008, 87–88; and see Hall 2014, 187–206.

- 3 Davis 2001.
- 4 Thekla in art: Nauwerth and Warns 1981. Pilgrims' flasks: Davis 2001, 114–120, 195–200.
- 5 On oral tradition in the Thekla literature, see Davis 2001, 6–7, 14–15.
- 6 On *ATH*, see Davis 2001, and commentary and translation in Barrier 2009.
- 7 Johnson 2006. The *Life* builds on *ATH*, but also diverges from it in important ways, as discussed by *ibid.*, 15–66.
- 8 Dagron 1978; Davis 2001; Johnson 2006.
- 9 On Egeria at Meriamlik, see Wilkinson 1999, 140–141.
- 10 *Mir.* 24.3. This passage evokes two geographical extremities of the *oikoumene* (Egypt and Phasis in Georgia) in order to emphasise the global reach of Thekla's miraculous powers.
- 11 Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.8; Dagron 1978, 61–63; Davis 2001, 38.
- 12 Talbot 2002, 154. On these sites, see also Yasin and Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 13 Compiled in Hild and Hellenkemper 1990, 441–443.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 441. On the cult's conditions for survival, see also Foss 2002, 135.
- 15 Mietke 2004. For the publication of this fieldwork, see Herzfeld and Guyer 1930. See also Hill 1996, 208–234, for a thorough re-assessment of the excavated churches.
- 16 As indicated by the title of Strzygowski 1903.
- 17 Cisterns: Peschlow 2009.
- 18 Bangert 2010, 312–314.
- 19 On toponymy, see Dagron 1978, 55, n. 1.
- 20 For such an approach, see *ibid.*, 55–79; Hill 1996, 208–234.
- 21 Recent literature on sacred space includes Bailey 2013; Yasin 2009; 2012a, as well as papers in Moser and Feldman 2014.
- 22 Bayliss 2004, 89–90; Hill 1996, 213–214.
- 23 Evagrius, *Eccl. hist.*, 3.8.
- 24 Lenski 1999.
- 25 On *temenoi* and boundaries in Greek sacred space, see Bergqvist 1967.
- 26 On Qal'at Sem'an, see Yasin and Hunter-Crawley, this volume.
- 27 Hild and Hellenkemper 1990, 443.
- 28 On the rock-cut passage, see Kristensen 2012, 70–71, and Kristensen 2016.
- 29 Cooper 1995, 22; Dagron 1978, 357, n. 1; Johnson 2006, 141–142.
- 30 The miracle mirrors the earlier stories of the appropriation of the region's pagan cults in constructing a new sacred landscape with Meriamlik as its centre, discussed in more detail in Kristensen 2016.
- 31 For other approaches to sacred economies, see Boer 2007 (Israel). On the comparable concept of the "miraculous economy", see Caner 2006; Déroche 1995, 238–249; Lopez 2013, 46–72.
- 32 Boer 2007, 34.
- 33 For an overview of recent literature on the economy of pilgrimage flasks, see Zerbini 2013, 72–73.
- 34 On the concept of connectivity, see Horden and Purcell 2000, 123–172. On geography in the *Miracles*, see also Honey 2013.
- 35 Canevello and Özyildirim 2013, 249.
- 36 See, for example, Lund 2013 on connections between Rough Cilicia and northwestern Cyprus as they can be traced through the ceramic evidence.
- 37 *Mir.* 28.7.
- 38 *Mir.* 10.3.
- 39 *Mir.* 12.8, and see Honey 2013, 258, n. 9.
- 40 Already Dagron noted the limited geographical spread of the *Miracles* (1978, 33).
- 41 Hill 1996, 217–225. Mietke 2009 offers a re-appraisal of the basilica's chronology based on unpublished notebooks from the 1907 excavations, suggesting that the original phase dates to 300–350, the second phase to 375–500 and the third phase to 450–500.

- 42 Herzfeld and Guyer 1930, 4–38.
- 43 Hill 1996, 209–210, 218–219. Dagron's claim that the martyrium was a round structure is based exclusively on Egeria's description which as we saw relates to a fourth-century church. By the fifth century, the martyrium could have been architecturally furnished in a rather different manner. The arrangement finds an architectural parallel in the South Church at Yanikhan, as discussed by Hill 1996, 256–260.
- 44 On the relationship between altars and relics, see Yasin 2009, 151–157. In Northern Syria, such side-chambers could contain reliquaries, e.g. the East Church at Babisqa and the West Church at Behyo (*ibid.*, 168–169). Of course, many other Syrian churches present a similar layout but without clear evidence for reliquaries (see Butler 1969).
- 45 Johnson 2006, 127, n. 30; 229; Talbot and Johnson 2012, 199–201. See also Cooper 1995.
- 46 *Mir.* 22; Dagron 1978, 67.
- 47 “Provincial architecture”: Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, 109.
- 48 Herzfeld and Guyer 1930, 38–46; Hill 1996, 214–217.
- 49 Yasin 2012b, 255–256.
- 50 Gough 1972; Herzfeld and Guyer 1930.
- 51 On the date, see Hill 1996, 225; Krautheimer and Ćurčić 1986, 245.
- 52 Herzfeld and Guyer 1930, 84–87; Hill 1996, 226.
- 53 Hill 1996, 232–233. On miraculously healing baths, see *Mir.* 25.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 227.
- 55 Grossmann 1998, 288–290.
- 56 Johnson 2006, 8. See also *Mir.* 17 and *Mir.* 32 on virgins sleeping inside the church.
- 57 On incubation as epiphany in the early Christian cult of saints, see Dal Santo 2012.
- 58 Grossmann 1998, 285.
- 59 Oil: *Mir.* 7 and 40. Filth: *Mir.* 18.3.
- 60 Cisterns: Herzfeld and Guyer 1930, 78–82; Peschlow 2009. Baths: Herzfeld and Guyer 1930, 82–87. Two of the cisterns were already noted by a traveller in the mid-nineteenth century. The cisterns are mentioned in *Mir.* 19. There was also a cistern east of the north church: Keil and Wilhelm 1931, Taf. 3.
- 61 Peschlow 2009, 67–68.
- 62 I owe this point to Louise Blanke.
- 63 Davis 2001, 22ff.
- 64 On the cult of saints and its break with pagan traditions of handling the dead, refer to Brown 1981.
- 65 Yasin 2009, 46–100, for a recent overview. On the necropolis at Meriamlik, see Hild and Hellenkemper 1990, 441.
- 66 *Mir.* 30.3, trans. Johnson. “Alive to God” is a quotation from Romans 6:11.
- 67 Dagron 1978, 57; Hill 1996, 209.
- 68 Hild and Hellenkemper 1990, fig. 386; Wilkinson 1981, 288–292.
- 69 For a re-assessment of burials in *martyria* at Salona, see Yasin 2012c.
- 70 Rebillard 2009; Yasin 2009, 210–239.
- 71 Dagron 1978, 66–67. Crosses: *Mir.* 22. Holy objects and *ex voto* gifts: *Mir.* 28. Gold and silver decoration in the church: *Mir.* 32. This miracle also discusses the possibility of moving this treasure to Seleukeia for safe-keeping.

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14 Pilgrimage and multi-religious worship

Palestinian Mamre in Late Antiquity

Vlastimil Drbal

A particularly interesting phenomenon in late antique pilgrimage is the presence of different religious groups at the same pilgrimage site.¹ Such sacred places visited by pilgrims had an ‘innate’ spiritual power and religiosity indivisible from the place itself. The late antique Near East and Egypt are outstanding areas where this phenomenon can be studied, although it can be observed in other territories and times as well.²

Generally, two scenarios have been identified for the establishment of Christian pilgrimage sites. Some pilgrimage sites were established at the same place in which a pagan pilgrimage site had previously existed: this is especially relevant for sites with healing activity, for example, Menouthis and Deir el-Bahari.³ However, in a few cases, pilgrims of different religions came to worship in the same place and at the same time.⁴ Besides Mamre, one thinks first of Jerusalem, where, in Late Antiquity, Christian pilgrims followed in the footsteps of the Empress Helena and Jewish pilgrims are also attested.⁵ Rusafa–Sergiopolis in Syria was a famous pilgrimage site of S. Sergius in Late Antiquity, worshipped by the Arabs even after their conversion to Islam. Following the Arab conquest, the Great Mosque was constructed in the northern part of the North Court of the so-called Basilica A.⁶ New results of the excavations conducted by Rina Avner in the Kathisma church (halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem) may suggest that during the last phase of the Umayyad period, the church was frequented by both Christian and Muslim pilgrims.⁷

This phenomenon of late antique pilgrimage can be observed at Mamre, where pagan, Jewish and Christian pilgrimage is attested. However, the nature of this multi-religious site has been debated. Based on a close analysis of the literary sources in comparison with the results from archaeological excavations, this chapter aims at re-evaluating the religious character of the site during Late Antiquity. In particular, the comparison with newly excavated Palestinian sites seems to indicate that a continuation of the non-Christian pilgrimage to Mamre even after the end of the fourth century is probable. Another aim of the chapter is to present a new argument against the credibility of Christian sources, in particular Eusebius, that claim a full early Christianization of the Roman Empire.

The late antique literary sources concerning the pilgrimage to Mamre are ambiguous. On the one hand, Eusebius, Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen

claim that Constantine ordered the destruction of pagan idols and that in the future, only Christians should worship at the site. On the other hand, the Piacenza Pilgrim seems to suggest that the site was still frequented by non-Christian pilgrims in the sixth century. So it seems that Mamre was in a unique position in Late Antiquity as a destination shared by pilgrims of different religious groups.⁸ The main question of this chapter, then, is the following: can the archaeological record of the site provide information as to whether the multi-religious character of Mamre was only a short episode during the reign of Constantine, or whether it continued throughout Late Antiquity until the sixth century? Furthermore, can this character be considered as ‘solely’ multi-religious, or can syncretistic traces be observed?

Most scholars have accepted since the excavations of the German archaeologist Andreas Evaristus Mader in the 1920s that the site of Mamre is to be identified with Haram Ramet el-Khalil, which lies approximately 3 km north of the centre of Hebron.⁹ Mader excavated an enclosure (49 m x 65 m) constructed of monolithic stones (Figure 14.1), similar to those seen in the Herodian constructions of the Machpelah Cave in Hebron and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Inside the enclosure is an altar, as well as a circular well; in the eastern part, Mader found



Figure 14.1 Haram Ramet el-Khalil: Enclosure (49 m × 65 m) constructed of monolithic stones.

Photo: V. Drbal.



Figure 14.2 Haram Ramet el-Khalil: Remains of a church identified by A. E. Mader as the Constantinian basilica.

Photo: Sandrine Bert Geith.

remains of a church that he identified as the Constantinian basilica from the fourth century AD mentioned in the literary sources (Figure 14.2).

While the identification of Mamre with Haram Ramet el-Khalil in the Herodian, Roman and Late Roman period is widely accepted, the more recent archaeological work done by Itzhak Magen in the 1980s demonstrates that such an identification is less probable for the earlier periods. Magen redates the sections of stone paving adjacent to the south wall, which Mader attributed to the monarchic and Hasmonean period, to later than the Herodian enclosure, and suggests that they in fact date 'not earlier than the Byzantine period.'¹⁰ The site of the 'terebinth of Mamre' mentioned in Genesis¹¹ should therefore, following some authors, be located within the boundaries of ancient Hebron (Tel Rumeidah).¹² So it seems that although Mamre may in the biblical period have been situated at Hebron, under King Herod the site was moved to Haram Ramet el-Khalil, the Mamre of the Roman and Byzantine periods. In the area north of Hebron there are two other sites which were claimed in later times to be Mamre: Khirbet Sibta, the so-called 'Russian Mamre' (the Russian Orthodox Church acquired the land in 1871), and Khirbet Nimra.¹³ In any case, the two sites (Mamre and Hebron) should always be seen as a unit: Hebron (with its cenotaphs of Abraham) was the burial site, Mamre (with its hypaethral area) a cultic open place.

Literary sources

As mentioned above, the late antique literary sources concerning the pilgrimage to Mamre are ambiguous. In the *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius mentions the visit by Eutropia, Constantine's mother-in-law, during which she found a number of pagan idols set up at the Oak of Mamre. She was shocked, not only by this but also by other abuses of the site, which she considered to be an important holy Christian place. Therefore she wrote a letter to Constantine which prompted the emperor to instruct Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, to burn the idols and destroy the pagan altar. A Christian basilica was to be constructed at the site. Following Eusebius, further pagan worship was prohibited on pain of the severest penalty. On this occasion Constantine stressed the role of Abraham for Mamre's religious importance.¹⁴

Socrates Scholasticus, writing 100 years after Eusebius, describes the rites of Mamre briefly in his *Ecclesiastical History*. His account is a short version of that written by Eusebius:

He [Constantine] constructed one church at the oak called Mamre, where the holy scriptures indicate that angels were entertained as guests in the presence of Abraham. For when the emperor learned that an altar was set up beneath the oak, and that Hellenic sacrifices were executed upon it, he accused, by means of a letter, Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, and the emperor ordered that the altar shall be destroyed and that a house of prayer shall be constructed at the oak.¹⁵

The Church historian Sozomen, writing before the middle of the fifth century, gives the most detailed description of the site in the time of Constantine, based on earlier sources:¹⁶

Here [at Mamre] the inhabitants of the country and of the regions around Palestine, the Phoenicians and the Arabians, assemble annually during the summer season to keep a brilliant feast; and many others, both buyers and sellers, gather on account of the fair. Indeed, this feast is zealously attended by everyone: by the Jews, because they boast of the patriarch Abraham; the polytheists, because of the visit of the angels; and by Christians too, because it was on that occasion that they appeared to the godly man, He who at a later time manifested himself openly through the Virgin for the salvation of mankind. They honoured this place with religious veneration – some praying to the God of all; some calling upon the angels, pouring out wine, offering incense, or an ox, he-goat, a sheep, or a cock. . . . No one during the time of the feast drew water from that well; for according to pagan use, some placed burning lamps near it; some poured out wine or cast in cakes; and other, coins, myrrh, or incense.¹⁷

Following these accounts, Constantine ordered the destruction of the pagan altar. With the new Christian basilica, the site was intended to be a solely Christian

holy place. But over 200 years later, the so-called Piacenza Pilgrim states (around AD 570) that in his time Jews and Christians gathered in the court of the Constantinian basilica, separated by a dividing wall. Pagans are no longer mentioned:

Here is [at Mamre] a basilica built with four porticoes; in the midst is an atrium without any roof; a partition runs across it, and on the one side enter Christians, and on the other side Jews, and burn much incense.¹⁸

Eusebius' description in the *Vita Constantini* of Eutropia's visit (which probably took place at the same time as that of the empress Helena, around AD 326), must be seen in the context of Eusebius' purpose in writing his work, idealizing the emperor who only a few years earlier had converted to Christianity. Until the early fourth century, the future Holy Land was Christianized only superficially, and the Christian character of Mamre at that time would have been, therefore, rather surprising. However, it has been argued that, rather than surprised by the dearth of Christian character at Mamre, Eutropia was shocked by the fact that she was not able to identify the affiliation of the pilgrims to a particular religious group.¹⁹ Another moment should also interest us: the order by Constantine to destroy the pagan idols. If we see this in the frame of his religious policy, such destruction was an isolated case; only five other examples are recorded in the literary sources.²⁰

The emphasis on the figure of Abraham in the letter of Constantine recorded by Eusebius was not accidental. In the *Vita Constantini* Eusebius presented the Christian Roman Empire of Constantine as a new era of Abraham and the patriarchs. His history is framed by two figures, Abraham and Constantine, with Jesus in the middle.²¹ In Palestine, a cult of angels existed²² who were linked to a belief that one of the angels who appeared to Abraham was the pre-incarnate Christ. This belief was developed in the fourth century by Eusebius.²³

The account by Socrates Scholasticus is of less interest as it appears to draw on Eusebius' earlier history. However, he mentions neither Eutropia's visit nor the belief that Christ appeared at Mamre. Rangar Cline supposed that 'this may indicate that Socrates did not share Eusebius' enthusiasm for understanding one of the three angels as the pre-incarnate Christ.'²⁴

Mamre during the Roman period: Archaeological evidence vs. literary sources

According to the early Christian authors, Mamre was a sacred place where the angels were venerated. There is, however, an important difference between the statement of Eusebius and Socrates Scholasticus connecting this veneration with Abraham, and that of Sozomen, who distinguishes between the Jewish veneration of Abraham and the polytheistic worship (Ἑλληνισμοί) of the angels. The cult of angels as spiritual intermediaries is known in the monotheistic and polytheistic west Semitic religions.²⁵ However, according to Nicole Belayche, Jewish veneration commemorating the three angels who appeared to Abraham must have been

present at the origin of the veneration of Mamre, whereas the veneration by the polytheists developed later.

The other view, based especially largely on archaeological material, considers Mamre to be an Idumaeian sacred place. In Magen's interpretation, King Herod built the site for the Idumaeians, who had inhabited the area since the destruction of the First Temple.²⁶ Mamre and Hebron are located in the original land of the Edomites, who began infiltrating into southern Judea following the Babylonian conquest. In the time between the destruction of the First Temple and that of the Second, the Edomites (then Idumaeians) conquered most of the Hebron hill country. After the conquest by John Hyrcanus, it was assumed that the Idumaeians were fully accepted as Jews in both religious and national affairs. Unfortunately, we have hardly any information about the culture and religion of the Idumaeians during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It seems, however, that they were converted only partially.²⁷

According to Magen, Mamre (Haram Ramet el-Khalil) and the Cave of Machpelah (the memorial of the Tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron) have to be seen as a unit, forming part of a political conception of King Herod's. The re-foundation of the two sites was part of Herod's effort to integrate the Idumaeians in his larger state comprising Judea, Idumaea and Samaria and centred at Jerusalem. The two sites, sacred to both Idumaeians and Jews, would form a bridge between the two faiths. As stressed recently by Magen, however, the two sites differed greatly in their essential nature and function: Mamre was a cult site for sacrifices and pilgrimages, while the Tombs of the Patriarchs were perceived as a memorial rather than a sacrifice or pilgrimage venue.²⁸

Magen, who excavated the north and east walls of Mamre, supports his view with archaeological material proving, in his opinion, that the whole enclosure dates to the Herodian period. He refutes the older view of Mader that, following a destruction during the Jewish war or the Bar Kokhba revolt, the walls were reconstructed under the emperor Hadrian.²⁹ The monolithic stones at Mamre, decorated with pilasters, may have been built by members of the same architectural school as the Machpelah Cave in Hebron and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.³⁰

It is evident that between these two views there is an important difference concerning the multi-religious character of Mamre in the Roman period. The angelic interpretation is based on the original Jewish veneration, to which the pagan worship was added later. The view based on the archaeological evidence supposes the creation of a syncretistic sacred place of Idumaeians and Jews under Herod. Magen draws no conclusion from this evidence: according to him, after the destruction of the Second Temple, Mamre became a solely pagan cult site.³¹ So, in Magen's opinion, the Idumaeian tradition did not continue in later periods. If, however, any reconstruction of the enclosure of Hadrian can be detected, it would be evidence for the continuity of the cult in the Roman period.

It has to be admitted that there is, aside from the altar dedicated to the Idumaeian god Qos, not much evidence to support the Idumaeian character of Mamre. There is no direct literary source which proves it. Achim Lichtenberger, who is not convinced by Magen's arguments in favour of an Idumaeian Mamre, only acknowledges 'a pagan-biblical character' of the cult at Mamre for the Roman

period. According to him, the group of worshippers could be called either 'Jewish,' 'Idumaeans' or 'pagans,' with no possibility of specifying this further. In any case, the cult of Mamre was not an exclusive one.³²

Mamre was not the only sacred site in Roman Palestine visited by both pagans and Jews. There is, for instance, the site of Gilgal, mentioned by Eusebius as a pagan ritual site. Gilgal is mentioned several times in the Old Testament; in the time of the prophets Hosea and Amos, the tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were making pilgrimages here. In the fourth century, Jewish sources mention Jews visiting the place.³³

A further issue is whether Mamre had a multi-religious or a syncretistic character.³⁴ Belayche, proponent of the angelic interpretation, denied the syncretistic nature of the site: 'We are not seeing a syncretistic cult but a meeting' whose devotees of different traditions 'respond to the same question of a means of communicating with divinity.'³⁵ However, if the foundation of the site was a political decision made by Herod (we leave the question of the Idumaeon character aside), a syncretistic character would be more probable.

The Toronto mould

In this context, a unique stone mould (3.5 cm high and 14 cm in diameter) must be mentioned (Figures 14.3a–14.3b).³⁶ It does not come from Haram Ramet el-Khalil itself; the find spot is not known, and it is said only to have come from the environment of Jerusalem. One side of the double-faced mould shows three angels, with the Greek inscription ΕΙΛΕΩC ΜΟΙ ΟΙ ΑΝΓΕΛΟΙ ('May the angels look propitiously upon me'). The three angels are standing behind a three-legged table, under a tree which can be identified as the Oak of Mamre. The central angel's right hand is raised and the other angels are pointing their staffs at a calf, and perhaps Abraham's well below. In the small exergue below, Abraham and Sarah are preparing the meal.³⁷ On the other side of the mould, an enthroned goddess wearing a star-studded robe is depicted. She is flanked by four cypresses and it is inscribed: ΔΕΧΟΜΕ ΧΑΙΡΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΑΝ ('I receive, rejoicing, the heavenly one'). By her side is a pile of round cakes, perhaps the favoured offering mentioned at the end of the Sozomen citation.³⁸ Lichtenberger suggests that this *dolente* type of the goddess had Phoenician models.³⁹

The iconography of the mould seems to combine Christian (three angels), Jewish (Abraham and Sarah) and pagan (the goddess Ourania) elements. However, a more detailed study of the elements allows a modified view. Following Margaret Frazer, 'the central figure, the Lord, is . . . distinguished in importance from his companions by his larger size and gesture of imperial benevolent proclamation'; so, the 'Lord' of Genesis is the pre-incarnate Christ, as described by Eusebius.⁴⁰ Cline denies the explicit Christological symbolism; rather than interpreting the raised-hand gesture of the central angel as a speaking gesture, he sees it in the context of the scene in which each angel points to a key feature of the site: the angel on the left to the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah, the angel on the right to the Well of Abraham, and the central angel to the Oak of Mamre.⁴¹



a



b

Figures 14.3a–b Two-sided mould, Byzantine, 4th century, limestone, 13.8 cm diameter, Malcove Collection, M82.271, Gift of Dr. Lillian Malcove to the University of Toronto, 1982 (courtesy of The University of Toronto Art Centre, photo Toni Hafkenscheid, a: recto, b: verso.)

But even the argument by Frazer concerning the supposedly larger size of this angel (symbolizing its importance) cannot serve as evidence of a Christian reading. Eusebius describes a picture (γραφί) as support for his interpretation in the relevant section of his treatise *Demonstratio Evangelica*, depicting three figures (angels) seated at Abraham's table. According to Eusebius, the central angel surpassed the other two in glory.⁴² Such a picture is not known from Mamre itself, but we do know of other representations with this iconography: a wall painting from a *cubiculum* in the Via Latina catacomb in Rome (fourth century); three illuminations from the Cotton Genesis, a Greek illuminated manuscript from the fourth or fifth century showing Abraham in the company of his visitors; a mosaic panel from the cycle of biblical images from the Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (c. 432–440); and the mosaic from the Basilica San Vitale in Ravenna (sixth century) where the scene of Abraham serving his guests is fused with the story of Isaac's sacrifice. These representations show the angels as similar in appearance, and the central figure is not made to look larger or more important. Only the mosaic panel from the Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore corresponds (and only in its upper register) more closely to Eusebius' image. The scene is divided into two registers, in both of which the three angels (accompanied by Abraham) are depicted, but in a different manner: above, the central figure is shown in a glowing *mandorla* indicating that he surpasses the other two in glory (as pointed out by Eusebius); below, all three angels, seated at a table, are decorated with a nimbus, and the central figure does not differ from the other two.⁴³ If on our mould the central angel is not larger (in other words: more important), this cannot be used as an argument for its Christian interpretation. For the goddess on the other side of the mould – Ourania – we can ask a similar question: is she a pagan goddess, or is the Virgin assimilated with her? Frazer argues that the figure is the Virgin, assimilated with Atargatis/Hera and Aphrodite Ourania, as some Christian texts from the fourth and fifth century would indicate.⁴⁴ In fact, Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–403) in his work on the heresies, *Panarion*, describes an offertory meal brought by the Queen of Heaven (Astarte–Ishtar–Atargatis) to Mary to celebrate her as a deity. Isidor of Pelusium (c. 360–431/451) attributes a similar heresy to the Nestorians.⁴⁵ As for the pagan interpretation of the goddess, we know that in the late Roman world Isis, Astarte, Atargatis and Aphrodite were all called Ourania.⁴⁶

Recently, Cline has proposed a more concrete identification of the goddess. He attempts to demonstrate that the Ourania of the mould is the mourning Aphrodite Ourania of Aphaca. In the Roman period, the sanctuary of Aphrodite and Adonis at Aphaca, on the mountainous slopes of Mount Lebanon, was a famous pilgrimage destination. The distance, of approximately 10 km from Byblos, corresponded to a day's walk for the pilgrims.⁴⁷ The famous pagan pilgrimage site was, according to Eusebius, destroyed under Constantine, as was Mamre:

This [Aphaca] was a grove and temple . . . dedicated to the foul demon known by the name of Venus. It was a school of wickedness for all the votaries of impurity, and such as destroyed their bodies with effeminacy. Here men undeserving of the name forgot the dignity of their sex, and propitiated the

demon by their effeminate conduct; here too unlawful commerce of women and adulterous intercourse, with their horrible and infamous practices, were perpetrated in this temple as in a place beyond the scope and restraint of law. . . . These proceedings, however, could not escape the notice of the great emperor [Constantine] . . . he decided that such a shrine was not fit to see the sun's light, and ordered the whole to be entirely demolished, dedications and all.⁴⁸

Socrates Scholasticus repeats only Eusebius' assertion that Constantine destroyed the shrine at Aphaca; Sozomen provides additional details, including that Aphrodite of Aphaca was called Ourania.⁴⁹

The crucial aspect in Cline's observations, as well as in my own on late antique pilgrimage at Mamre, is the dating of the mould. For Cline, the end of the sanctuary of Aphaca in the fourth century is the major argument for dating the mould to the fourth century. As he writes: 'Eusebius' description . . . provides a possible terminus ante quem for the mould, as it is unlikely that a mould depicting Aphrodite of Aphaca would have been produced after the site was destroyed.'⁵⁰ However, if we accept Eusebius' account of the end of the multi-religious character of Mamre (and Aphaca), this would indicate that the cults coexisted for only a very short period of time. Frazer, however, argues that 'Mamre, even after Constantine's instructions to his bishops, was not rid of its pagan past' and dates the Toronto mould to the fifth or early sixth century.⁵¹

The religious conversion of Palestine: Aphaca and other sanctuaries

At Aphaca, we may ask the same question as concerning Mamre. Can the account of Eusebius, repeated by Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen, really be seen as proof for the destruction of the sacred site? Cline is partially aware of the problem of credibility of these accounts: according to him, it is possible that Eusebius exaggerated, and that Aphaca was not destroyed completely and continued to function into the 350s or 360s.⁵² Nevertheless, for Cline, the reports by the early Christian authors about the destruction of the temple at Aphaca (as well as the shrine of Asclepius at Aigai in Cilicia, which follows immediately after that of Aphaca⁵³) are considered to be historical accounts. Evidence for the later existence of the sacred sites, such as that given by Zonaras for Aigai, is limited.⁵⁴ However, there are two objections: a literary and an archaeological one.

First, there is a question of the literary *topos*: the motive of the destruction of the pagan temples represents a canonical part of the works of the early Christian authors. Often, the cases are repeated in several works, as with Mamre and Aphaca. The focal point of the destructions is the reign of Constantine. In Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*, the destruction of temples is part of the emperor's Church policy in order to prove his orthodoxy and Christian morality. It is characteristic, as stressed by Ulrich Gotter, that the destruction of Mamre, Aphaca, Aigai, Heliopolis and Jerusalem in Eusebius are repeated in the works of Socrates Scholasticus and

Sozomen as a group. They add to it other acts against the pagans, such as the prohibition of gladiator games and pagan festivals, the de-sacralization of the pagan cult objects through their transport into the new capital Constantinople, and many other actions.⁵⁵

More important is the archaeological aspect. At Aphaca, we cannot compare the literary sources with the archaeological material, as almost nothing survived there. At Haram Ramet el-Khalil, as will be discussed below, there are ambiguous indications for the continuity of the multi-religious character into Late Antiquity. A comparison with other Palestinian cult places can help to answer the question.

New archaeological research could correct older views that the religious conversion of Palestine had been completed by the mid-fifth century, a date which marks the end of the Palestinian pagan communities.⁵⁶ This view seemed to be supported by the rise of new Christian holy sites visited by thousands of pilgrims. However, the process of transition from paganism to Christianity was more complex and diverse than scholars formerly believed. First, urban and rural settlements must be differentiated. Indeed, the pagan cults in the Palestinian towns did not survive beyond the fifth or, at the latest, the sixth century.⁵⁷ In the rural settlements (provincial towns and villages), where the majority of the population was concentrated, despite the claims of the Christian sources,⁵⁸ the process of adopting Christianity took longer.⁵⁹

The spring of 'Ein-Tzur, around 10 km east of Caesarea, is described by the Pilgrim from Bordeaux in 333. He (or she) records that the spring was visited by women who wished to have a child.⁶⁰ As part of this ritual, these women offered coins; hundreds of these votive offerings were found during the recent archaeological excavations. There were 135 coins from the fifth century and 575 coins from the sixth century, which proves that the religious practice reached its peak at that time. That there were only ten coins from the seventh century testifies to a decline in visits in that period.⁶¹

The sacred site of Mount Hermon, the southernmost tip of the Anti-Lebanon mountain ridge, was home to numerous pagan gods, as attested by Eusebius.⁶² Evidence from archaeological excavations indicates that pagan practices continued throughout Late Antiquity.⁶³

So the speed of conversion of the population in Palestine was not quicker than in other parts of the Roman Empire. The rapid process of Christianization in Jerusalem was exceptional (at the end of the fourth century, there were almost no signs of former pagan practices), and not characteristic of other parts of the country. In most cases, temples were left untouched rather than destroyed, as was the case in Gaza and on Mount Gerizim. While important pagan sacred sites continued mostly until the mid-fifth century, the local cult sites, perhaps of little interest to the Church, can be attested throughout Late Antiquity.⁶⁴

Archaeological evidence from Mamre

From Haram Ramet el-Khalil itself, there are two groups of archaeological finds which may confirm the multi-religious character of this pilgrimage site in Late Antiquity. Among the votive offerings found near the altar, the tree and the well,

there are first of all lamps which we may relate to the description by Sozomen, who mentions the ritual of the offering of lamps.⁶⁵ Fifty intact lamps and further fragments were found here, most of them dated by Mader to the fourth and fifth century, some to the sixth century. Looking at the symbols, Christian crosses are rather rare. More frequent are symbols such as a pair of doves, or a fish, which Mader sees only in the context of early Christian art.⁶⁶ However, the dove has to be linked to the cult of Atargatis, the Dea Syria Lucian, as well. It appears in a pair, each poking out from a small temple-like building, e.g. in the coinage of Trebonianus Gallus (AD 251–253).⁶⁷ A fish can be linked with Atargatis as well, as can be seen on a bas-relief from northern Mesopotamia in which Atargatis' throne is decorated with fish.⁶⁸ In addition, the menorah is depicted on some lamps. A jug with two handles, a sacred emblem used by early Christians as well as Jews, is depicted on the lamp 161b.⁶⁹ Belayche considers the ritual lamp tradition to be of Jewish influence, and compares it with the ritual of the Judaeo-pagan group of Hypsistarians in Anatolia.⁷⁰

At Haram Ramet el-Khalil (especially in the altar area and in the well) and its surroundings, coins from the Roman and late antique period up to Justinian I were found. Most of them date to the reign of Constantine, Constantine II and Constantius II, which may be an indication that at that time, the sanctuary reached a peak in activity. However, the coins which bear portraits of the Roman emperors provide no information about the alleged multi-religious character of the site in Late Antiquity.⁷¹ In the foundations of the church identified by him as the Constantinian basilica mentioned by Eusebius,⁷² Mader found the following sculptural fragments: a relief with the head of Hermes, two fragments of the head of Dionysos, a fragment of a lion head and a votive altar. All these fragments, according to Mader, were destroyed by force and to him they represent clear archaeological confirmation for the execution of the Constantinian decree ordering the destruction of the pagan idols.⁷³ It is, however, not necessary to see the destruction of statues in exclusively negative terms. As suggested recently by Troels Myrup Kristensen, the deliberate destruction of objects was a common practice in Late Antiquity. Usually interpreted as a proof of Christian intolerance (as by Mader in the case of Mamre), it may have, according to Kristensen, 'a very different meaning: these images may have been seen as important relics of the past or even as a means of building up visual power for the Church.'⁷⁴ Since the interpretation of the remains of the church with the Constantinian basilica must remain hypothetical, I believe we should be very cautious about connecting the fragments of statues found beneath the church with the act of the destruction reported by the Christian authors. The fragments may have been put there later; as the cases of other Palestinian temples indicate, it is not necessary to connect this act with any destruction.

The votive altar with the Greek letters KOC on the base arouses special interest. Mader connected the letters KOC at the votive altar with the abbreviation of *consule* or with the god Hermes–Mercury.⁷⁵ Lichtenberger compared the aniconic decoration of the rosettes and the technical execution of the altar with the artefacts of the Second Temple period. In his view, the altar was dedicated to Qos, the national god of the Idumaeans.⁷⁶ Other fragments were found in a bad condition and their interpretation is unclear.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Since the literary sources are unclear, can the archaeology confirm the multi-religious character of the pilgrimage site of Mamre in Late Antiquity (especially in the fifth and sixth centuries)? The architectural remains from this period from Haram Ramet el-Khalil are sparse; on the basis of the excavations conducted by Magen, it can only be said that the stone paving of the enclosure can be viewed as late antique. The remains of the church with the statues are not necessarily to be associated with Constantine's order of destruction as reported in the literary sources. The lamps cannot be exactly dated. Nevertheless, the Jewish and Christian symbols suggest the multi-religious character at least as far as the fifth century. The Toronto mould is still a puzzle. Cline tried to identify the depicted goddess with Aphrodite from Aphaca, but the dating of the mould to the fourth century is based mainly on Christian literary sources, which mention the destruction of the sacred site. As the basis for our considerations is a lack of faith in these sources, they cannot be used as support for it. As the new archaeological research shows, the continuity of the pagan sacred places in Palestine can be demonstrated at least until the mid-fifth century, in some (especially those of smaller size) sites until the sixth century. This would suggest that this was also the case at Mamre, and confirms the account of the Pilgrim from Piacenza, who reported visits of Jewish and Christian pilgrims around AD 570.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is part of the project 'Für Seelenheil und Lebensglück: Studien zum byzantinischen Pilgerwesen und seinen Wurzeln' at the Römisch-Germanisches Museum Mainz (Leibniz WissenschaftsCampus Mainz: Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident). The author would like to thank the organizers of the conference, and especially Troels Myrup Kristensen, for the invitation to attend the Aarhus symposium, as well as the reviewers for their critical remarks and for pointing me to recent publications.
- 2 India: Younger 1992. Morocco: Ben-Ami 1990.
- 3 Menouthis: Montserrat 1998. Deir el-Bahari: Lajtar 2006, 80–104.
- 4 For further typology cf. Kedar 2001.
- 5 Jewish and Christian pilgrims visited different parts of the town. After the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, the focus of the very limited Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem was the surroundings of the Temple Mount with the Wailing Wall (the veneration of this part of the Western Wall begins in the fourth century), see Tsafirir 1995, 374–376. The focus of the Christian pilgrims was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. However, in some cases, the holy sites of the Jews and Christians were the same: the tomb of Pelagia-Hulda-Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya on Mount of Olives, the tomb of King David on Mount Zion etc. For the broader context cf. Drbal 2017. During the early Umayyad period, Jerusalem also became a centre for Muslim pilgrimage. According to later Muslim sources, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) tried to establish Jerusalem as the main place of Muslim pilgrimage, Elad 1999, 302–303.
- 6 The chapel in the Christian basilica was connected by a door with the Great Mosque, clear archaeological proof that Muslims worshipped the saint, which is confirmed by literary sources, Sack 1996, 155–156.
- 7 Avner 2006–2007, 550.
- 8 Fowden 2002 (Mamre: 125–129).
- 9 Rupp 1981.

- 10 However, Mader was convinced that he had found enough archaeological material from biblical times at Haram Ramet el-Khalil to identify it also as the biblical Mamre. Mader 1957, 183, 240; Magen 1993, 942.
- 11 Genesis 13:18, 18:1, 23:19. According to the biblical story, when Abraham, his wife Sarah and cousin Lot, looking for the Promised Land, came from Egypt to the Negev desert, they found that the sparse vegetation was insufficient to support their animals. Therefore Lot left, and Abraham continued to Mamre: 'So Abraham moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron' (13:18). Here Abraham built an altar to the One God. This is where he was visited by three angels who told him of the future birth of his son Isaac.
- 12 Finkelstein 1988, 47–48. As less probable: Lichtenberger 2007, 68–69. Other scholars identify the biblical Mamre with other localities in the neighbourhood of Hebron, D. Jericke with Khirbet Nimra. Jericke 1996.
- 13 Mader 1957, 339–345. Khirbet Nimra: Jericke 2003, 48–52.
- 14 Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.51–53.
- 15 Socrates, *Hist. eccl.*, 1.18.5–6.
- 16 For the connection between the early Christian Church historians cf. Leppin 1996.
- 17 Sozom., *Hist. eccl.*, 2.4.
- 18 Antoninus of Piacenza, *Itinerarium* 30.
- 19 Cline 2011, 114.
- 20 Lane Fox 1987, 671–672; Saradi-Mendelovici 1990, 48–49.
- 21 Hunt 1982, 102–103.
- 22 Piccirillo 2000.
- 23 Euseb., *Demonstratio evangelica*, 5–9.
- 24 Cline 2011, 111.
- 25 Belayche 2001, 99; Cline 2011, 113.
- 26 Magen 1993, 942. Doubts: Lichtenberger 2007, 67.
- 27 Magen 2008a, 87.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 88–90; 2008b, 112.
- 29 Mader 1957, 81.
- 30 Magen 1993, 942; 2003, 254; 2008b, 110, 112.
- 31 Magen 1993, 942.
- 32 Lichtenberger 2007, 64–70. This corresponds with the fact that many towns in Palestine (as Caesarea or Scythopolis) had a mixed population, cf. Bar 2008, 277.
- 33 Eus., *Onomast.* 64.24; Hos 4:15, 9:15, 12:12[11]; Amos 4:4, 5:5. Bar 2008, 277; Kraus 2000, 164. The exact location of Gilgal is still a controversy among scholars. The identification with Tel el-Meffjer is not probable, following the archaeological excavations. Van Bekkum 2011, 145 (with older literature). An archaeological comparison with Mamre is not possible here. The site of Gilgal continued in the Byzantine period. Cf. Schneider 1931.
- 34 I am aware of the problem with syncretism. For the various types of syncretism in the Near East cf. Budin 2004, 97–102.
- 35 Belayche 2001, 104.
- 36 Frazer 1979. Malcove Collection at the University of Toronto (M82.271).
- 37 *Ibid.*, 137–138.
- 38 Cline 2014, 41; Frazer 1979, 140; Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 2.4.
- 39 Lichtenberger 2007, 64 (footnote 31). One of these goddesses was Aphrodite from Aphaca, an idea recently developed by Cline. Cf. Du Mesnil du Buisson 1970, 108–109; Cline 2014.
- 40 Frazer 1979, 137; Euseb., *Demonstratio evangelica*, 5–9.
- 41 Cline 2014, 41.
- 42 Euseb., *Demonstratio evangelica*, 5–9.
- 43 San Vitale in Ravenna: Angiolini Martinelli 1997, 203.
- 44 Frazer 1979, 142.

- 45 Epiph., *Panarion haer.* 79.1; Isidor of Pelusium, Ep. LVI, PG 78, cols 215–218.
- 46 Weitzmann 1979, 583.
- 47 Cline 2014, *passim*.
- 48 Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.55.4. Cline emphasizes the fact that the description of Aphaca follows nearly directly after that of Mamre which ‘indicates that he [Eusebius] considered Aphaca and Mamre to be two of the most prominent religious sites in early fourth-century Syria and Palestine.’ Unfortunately, he confuses two works by Eusebius, stating that the descriptions of Mamre and Aphaca are in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Cline 2014, 45. For the practised pagan rituals cf. Millar 1993, 217, 276–277.
- 49 Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.18.10; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.5.
- 50 Cline 2014, 37.
- 51 Frazer 1979, 142. The author adds that ‘its figural style is unlikely to be pre-Constantinian,’ which is really not probable.
- 52 Cline 2014, 37, 39.
- 53 Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 2.60; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.*, 2.60.
- 54 Cline 2014, 39; Zonar. 13.12.
- 55 Gotter 2008, 43–49.
- 56 Older views: Avi-Yonah 1984, 220–221; Tsafrir 1998.
- 57 As an example, the cult in proximity of Paneas (Caesarea Philippi) at the foot of Mount Hermon in northern Palestine can be mentioned. The cult, dedicated to Pan, was established in the third century BC; around 19 BC, Herod erected nearby a magnificent temple. Excavations could prove that the cult site flourished in the fourth century. It prospered until the mid-fifth century, when it was abandoned; there are no archaeological traces of destruction. Cf. Bar 2008, 283.
- 58 According to Christian sources, bishops were already installed by the mid-fifth century in many of the rural areas. They claim a zealous religious activity of monks and priests during the first half of the fifth century as well. Allegedly, many monks and priests settled in the rural areas of Palestine. This testimony, as stressed by Bar, is to be regarded with caution. Bar 2008, 285–286.
- 59 Bar 2008, 275–276.
- 60 *Itinerarium burdigalense* 585–586.
- 61 Barkay 2000. As stressed by Bar, it cannot be determined with certainty whether the tradition mentioned by the Pilgrim from Bordeaux is pagan or Christian. Cf. Bar 2008, 278. Based on the context, a pagan character is more probable.
- 62 Euseb., *Onomast.* 20.9–14.
- 63 Bar 2008, 288.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 288–289.
- 65 Sozom., *Hist. eccl.*, 2.4.
- 66 Mader 1957, 156–158.
- 67 Kirkpatrick 2008, 173.
- 68 Drijvers 1980, 92.
- 69 Mader 1957, 158–160.
- 70 Belayche 2001, 98–99.
- 71 Mader 1957, 167–180. The few coins from the fifth and sixth centuries could be interpreted as proof for a decline of the site at that time. The peak of the sanctuary is represented by 135 coins from the reign of Constantine, 45 coins of Constantine II (co-emperor 337–340) and 112 coins of Constantius II (337–361). However, a connection with the religious character cannot be proven.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 95. However, Magen doubts if the ruins can be really dated in the Constantinian period. Cf. Magen 2003, 254.
- 73 Mader 1957, 135: ‘Sie [the sculptural fragments] waren alle in dem Steinbett zwischen den Fundamenten der Konstantin-Basilika vergraben und sind eine überraschende archäologische Bestätigung, dass der im Baudekret Konstantins gegebene Befehl zur gänzlichen Vernichtung der Götzenbilder radikal und brutal ausgeführt wurde.’

- 74 Kristensen 2013, 31–32, 208.
 75 Mader 1957, 137.
 76 Lichtenberger 2007, 64–65. The name of the famous god of the Idumaeans Qos appears in the name of Costobarus, the Idumaeen military commander, who married Salome, Herod's sister (Jos. Flav. *Ant.* XV, 253–257). Cf. Magen 2008a, 87–88.
 77 Lichtenberger 2007, 65 (note 33). In my opinion, the fact that they were found together with the altar of the Idumaeen god Qos could indicate that these statues were not classical works of art but belonged to the Idumaeen culture. In this sense, the Idumaeen character of Mamre continued through the Roman period. However, this idea is only a hypothesis.

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Responses



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15 Excavating pilgrimage

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The field of pilgrimage studies is complicatedly cross-disciplinary with significant literatures in many fields – not least history, theology, art history, anthropology, sociology and archaeology. These disciplines do not always talk to each other and are often at cross-purposes, in part because of different axiomatic starting points, different disciplinary protocols or different methodological practices. Indeed, different national traditions of study hardly talk to each other in this field.¹ A good example of the disciplinary problem is the interdisciplinary conference on pilgrimage at Roehampton in 1988, which ultimately gave rise to the important anthropological collected volume, *Contesting the Sacred*.² The conference descended into a fight between ‘the deconstructive impetus of anthropological analysis’ (this was, after all, the 1980s) and the defenders of the ‘category of pilgrimage . . . as a bounded entity’ (primarily historians and theologians), with the anthropologists ultimately leaving and producing their own book.³

Within this mix of scholarly investments – many charged with not always compatible views about what religion is and what it should be – material culture has always had a peculiar place. For while major works of art and architecture – from temples, churches, mosques and other places of worship to prime objects of devotion such as statues, icons or relics encased in reliquaries – have always been among the most impressive surviving remains of pilgrimage activity, patronage and enthusiasm in the past,⁴ and while archaeological evidence is among the most suggestive and intriguing ways of exploring the actual structures and configurations of the great sites of the past, the disciplinary thrust of those who have dominated the field of pilgrimage studies – especially anthropologists and historians but also theologians – has been resolutely textual, especially if we include oral accounts by informants under the heading of ‘textual’ (in the sense that after recording they are written down and are not material-cultural). That is, our understandings of the material culture of pilgrimage are framed by a narrative either constructed from living informants’ accounts or from written sources (whether scriptural and exegetic) or from all kinds of documentary data, including first-person writings, epigraphic instructions on site, the invocations on souvenirs and amulets, and so forth. The question of the relation of archaeology to text – one

of the great and problematic theoretical issues in all visual and material-cultural study – is fundamental to any exploration of ‘excavating pilgrimage’, and it is not simple. It should be said that the rise of pilgrimage studies as a scholarly category of Greek and Roman religion succumbs to precisely this pattern – it is founded on readings of specific texts (such as Pausanias, Lucian’s *De Dea Syria* or Aelius Aristides’ *Sacred Tales*),⁵ or historical accounts that are grounded in a range of written sources and inscriptions.⁶ Among the weaknesses of such textualism in pilgrimage studies – something this volume actively strives to resist – is an emphasis on the views of literate elites (or elite attitudes to observations of ‘popular piety’) and a reduction in the range of possible practices and empirical data for the study of pilgrimage.

In a significant sense, in the seminal anthropological contribution of Victor and Edith Turner to the theoretical understanding of pilgrimage, and in the range of responses to this (many of them rightly critical),⁷ pilgrimage has been treated as a subset or special case of ritual.⁸ The larger theme of ritual was itself not only a major topic of anthropological study for many decades but has become a crucial concept for archaeologists exploring material culture in religious contexts.⁹ Yet despite serious art historical and archaeological commitment to issues of ritual (as demonstrated by the essays in this volume, for instance), the bulk of specifically anthropological study has remained persistently impervious to any aspects of material culture in relation to ritual.¹⁰ At the same time, while ritual has become of serious importance to archaeologists, with the exception of the volume published here and of a special issue of *World Archaeology* of the 1990s,¹¹ pilgrimage has by and large received relatively little *theoretical* attention from material-cultural specialists (although they have exploited it as an explanatory category for all manner of specific or site-related material).

If we take two major recent overviews of archaeology in relation to religion, Julian Droogan’s *Religion, Material Culture and Archaeology* (2012) and the Blackwell *Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World* (edited by Rubina Raja and Jörg Rüpke, 2015), the issues in relation to pilgrimage are clear. Droogan, laudably trans-historical and hence theoretical in scope, finds no space at all for pilgrimage, although he discusses landscape at length and gives some attention to ritual. Raja and Rüpke, whose book despite its title is in fact focused solely on Greek and Roman religion with a few skirmishes into early Christianity (and hence quite closely echoes in scope the historical and cultural focus of this volume), find space only for one paper, by Thierry Luginbühl, that includes some discussion of pilgrimage, significantly placed in the section entitled ‘Archaeology of Ritual’.¹² Oddly – given that pilgrimage has been a problematic category for many historians and archaeologists of ancient religion (on the grounds that the concept is Christianizing)¹³ – the book has no discussion of Christian pilgrimage in its late antique sections. Although Luginbühl’s chapter is not explicit about this, the placement of pilgrimage alongside processions as categories of ritual is effectively a definitional move that uses mobility as a way of framing the concept of pilgrimage, not by any means a bad idea,¹⁴ as a ‘religiously motivated voyage’.¹⁵

One key issue admitted by Luginbühl is extremely important for this volume, for the archaeology of pilgrimage in general and indeed arguably for the whole field of the archaeology of ritual. He writes:

These religiously motivated voyages can hardly be understood through archaeological investigation, and in the quasi-total absence of literary sources, require an effort of imagination fuelled by practical experience and ethnographic comparisons.¹⁶

To put this another way and perhaps a touch more aggressively, in the absence of textual evidence to guide the archaeologist's assumptions, how can we tell that it is appropriate to infer ritual, let alone pilgrimage, from any given artefact or space as archaeologically attested?¹⁷ This is both an empirical and an epistemological crux in the study of all forms of material culture in relation to religion and by extension to pilgrimage, our specific concern here. What textual evidence supplies is the *faith* to make the interpretative move that assumes pilgrimage or ritual was behind a given archaeological datum, on the grounds that someone in the culture in antiquity had already interpreted it this way. Without such evidence we are reduced to hunches guided by the ideological or discursive agendas of given scholars, whose 'efforts of imagination' are indeed fuelled by their own practical experience and potentially the ethnographic comparisons they may choose to adduce. These are disastrously problematic guides to imagination: since 'practical experience' in modernity is the antithesis of the understanding of the historically-situated difference between us and antiquity, while ethnographic comparison – in this context, at any rate – is liable to be either whimsical, depending on what a particular scholar knows or does not know, or malicious in that other potential comparisons that may disprove the case can very easily be ignored. The dangers, in other words, of assuming anything we want when material-cultural evidence is not framed by textual constraints are rife and huge.¹⁸ This problem – absolutely fundamental to my mind – vitiates all archaeological study of pilgrimage where we do not have textual sources to help us. It means that, in the absence of texts, while pilgrimage can be assumed as one of a series of potential explanations for given material-cultural data, it can never be proven or stand more soundly than a more-or-less informed imaginative speculation.¹⁹ And even if textual sources exist they may not be referring to something that we would nowadays designate as 'pilgrimage'.

But the problem about material culture and text is also present – differently so – when we do have ancient writing to help frame our questions. For it means that to infer religious activity in the past through material-cultural evidence, archaeology and art history are always *dependent* on a source-and-document-driven guide or framework. Especially in oral and non-literate cultures, this means it is extremely difficult to determine whether we can apply a ritual-based or pilgrimage-framed interpretation for data in the archaeological record (if we assume we cannot do so without a text to grant some kind of greater likelihood than pure whimsy to the assumption of pilgrimage); but clearly, in the partially oral (at any rate, non-scriptural) culture of ancient religion, the availability of texts in religious contexts

was anything but ubiquitous; it was at best elite (and therefore fails to account for a large proportion of religious activity) and it was even more sporadic when cast as *post hoc* literary accounts of sacred travel (whose chances of survival are anyway very low). *A priori*, therefore, it is absurdly reductive to insist that we can only extrapolate 'pilgrimage' if we have texts that allow us to do this. This creates a fundamental impasse, to which a solution is not obvious. Given a particular set of material-cultural data, in the absence of texts that help move us to the inference of pilgrimage, we are caught between the profound risks of speculative whimsy if we do decide to interpret such material in terms of pilgrimage and the real likelihood of reductivism in excluding the possibility of pilgrimage. Yet that is the impasse we are in, since the alternative to having some kind of textual hint that the artefact or site with which we are dealing had a sacred context is the fantasy-land of modern investment, supposition and imagination. We might also ask, more radically, what theoretical or other purpose is actually served by calling something pilgrimage. All the chapters in this volume that deal with Graeco-Roman or Christian material can effectively proceed safely in the knowledge that there is some textual evidence to support the conclusions drawn from excavation or visual and spatial analysis. But this means that they operate under the shadow of textual dominance over material and visual culture, a historical and historicist frame around archaeology, which is to say – they succumb to that empirical hierarchy, so profound and problematic in the humanistic disciplines, that puts material evidence below textual evidence.

One suggestion made by Luginbühl for working around the absence of texts is the use of 'ethnographic comparisons' and he himself moves to Hinduism as a comparandum,²⁰ rather as Heather Hunter-Crawley opens her chapter in this volume with her own experience of Sikh pilgrimage. I worry about the specific adduction of particular comparative examples: when Luginbühl claims that 'pilgrimages of the contemporary Hindu populations present obvious similarities with certain types of antique religious pilgrimages', the problems are profound. The conditions of modernity in India (let alone the Hindu diaspora in Europe and America) are radically different from antiquity in the Mediterranean; the assumptions about religion are close to incomparable; for every similarity there must be dozens of divergences. Hunter-Crawley, by using the first person to deny generalization to her remarks, rightly emphasizes the difficulty of taking autopsy (especially by outsiders of the rituals of communities to which they do not belong) as anything more than evocation. If comparativism is to be in more rigorous intellectual play – and in principle this is an excellent idea – then it has to be much more wide-ranging than the use of whimsically chosen examples, more propositional and systematic, taking in not only the 'world religions' but also more ancient and oral religious cultures and other modern forms of religious life. Despite attempts to gesture in this direction,²¹ there has to date been no systematic scholarly attempt at a full-scale comparative discussion of pilgrimage across a multi-cultural range of religions that has been substantive. The problem of Christianizing assumptions (especially in any applications of the Turners' work, which was explicitly about Christianity) is serious since any attempt to construct an exceptionalist, defined or unique category of pilgrimage carries serious risks of Eurocentric (indeed Christianocentric)

apologetics.²² Of significance in any such comparative exercise needs to be the triangulation of any empirical case-studies with the stance, position and voice of the scholar doing the comparing, since any evidence advanced is effectively channelled through his or her interpretative framing.

*

One way forward – both in respect of the problems of Christianocentrism and in relation to the material-cultural versus text-driven conundrum – might be to start with a flexible definition of pilgrimage that emphasized the convergence of a series of key characteristics, or perhaps the co-existence of a number of variables, not all of which need be present for us to adopt the term pilgrimage usefully. Theory in the 1990s, in response to the work of the Turners, suggested a constellation of factors – ‘person’, ‘place’, ‘text’ – as constants within pilgrimage.²³ I think this was a good development, especially in opening possibilities for cross-cultural and interdisciplinary conversation about what does seem to be a related structural phenomenon across cultures and religions, even ones initially unconnected. I would now, however, draw the theoretical frame somewhat differently.

Pilgrimage constitutes a particular relation of *person* and *place* constructed through *mobility*.²⁴ The issue of travelling or journeying has a double relation to place, since place implies both the space that the pilgrim travels through and the goal to which he or she aims (or which, after the event, is decided upon as having been the goal). Mobility is thus the vector that links the subjectivity of person with the objectivity of place. Mobility as a vector linking subject and object is both a matter of actual embodied movement and of a mental process – this latter being a direction or intent about journeying, whether personal or collective, in pilgrims’ minds (and hence not necessarily an act of travel as such but plausibly an act of imagined or vicarious travel). Mobility as mental process is a kind of *narrative*, which gives meaning to the journey itself, to the person making it and to place – both the landscape through which the journey is made and the specific goal to which it is aimed. That narrative, as the necessary subjective counterpart to actual voyaging, is key to determining whether a journey by a person to a place may be defined as pilgrimage. As a subjective process of travel, narrative allows all kinds of fantasy journeys and imagined voyages to count as forms of vicarious pilgrimage. *Text* as such is not essential to pilgrimage *per se* (although it may be unavoidable for our empirical ability to say with firmness that such and such a site or such and such a journey were pilgrimage-connected). But texts are fundamental as records, frames and ideological formulations of the *narratives* that underlie the subjective intent implicit in directed mobility. Texts – whether the written accounts of travels, instructions inscribed on site, claims of healing or miracle and so forth – are effectively embodiments of the crucial *narrative* element of pilgrimage.

The embodiment issue is fundamental. Pilgrimage is both the embodiment of an abstract or universal injunction (like the Hajj in Islam, or a more particular set of inscribed instructions in a Greek sacred centre) in a specific and personal act of travel (by an individual or by a group), and the embodiment of the narratives

around such travel in texts. Embodiment personalizes, makes real and meaningful, what may otherwise be perceived as general religious truths – supremely through ritual activity (of which sacred travel is one important instance). Space, place, mobility and so forth – real experiences for real people in the world – come to stand for, to be natural symbols of, much more abstract theological or religious truths in very different systems of belief and religious practice. Indeed, the very act of pilgrimage, even if not front-loaded with religious meanings in a given case, comes to have the potential to evoke the big religious questions either during the process of sacred travel or in retrospect.

One upshot of an emphasis on a *narrative* counterpart to *travel* as essential aspects of pilgrimage is that pilgrimage is not a reified category in itself. It is rather a *post hoc* description, an account of religious experience, which serves to explain and to frame the past; or (as a picture of a process in the past) to shape the future. Whether in relation to individuals or collectives, the two core aspects of mobility in pilgrimage – movement through space and the progress to a defined goal (one that may only become clear after the event, and one that may not actually be attained, as Chaucer’s pilgrims do not in fact reach the Shrine of St Thomas in the course of the *Canterbury Tales*) – are turned into something we can determine as ‘pilgrimage’, rather than any other form of travel, specifically *through* the kind of narrative in which they are subsumed. Such narratives are likely to have a religious or sacred element, or one which draws on some kind of sacred model, even if ironically. Such stories may set up expectations for future travel (even in the same individual, as in the case of Felix Fabri, the late medieval friar from Ulm, whose first pilgrimage to Palestine was a ‘failure’ and thus necessitated a second journey)²⁵ and they may reinvent the past in terms more ideologically suited to present needs.

The advantage of seeing pilgrimage as a *post-eventum* explanatory narrative, a fiction that makes sense of the past, is that it takes away the need for initial intention or purpose (something we can only ever impute unless it is explicitly stated in a text). It acknowledges the epistemological problem about textual or literary framing, since narratives can be oral; but it does not solve the insuperable empirical problem for material-cultural studies that if we are not given a clear pilgrimage-based narrative (of the sort that texts do supply) then we cannot certainly infer pilgrimage from most forms of archaeological or art historical data.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 Eade and Albera 2015, 1–22.
- 2 Eade and Sallnow 1991, 1.
- 3 Bowman 1988, quotes on p. 20.
- 4 Recently on architecture and the sacred, see Davies *et al.* 2013 and Ousterhout and Wescoat 2012.

- 5 Pausanias: e.g. Elsner 1992; Hutton 2005; Rutherford 2001. Lucian: Lightfoot 2005; Aelius Aristides: Petsalis-Diomidis 2010.
- 6 E.g. Dillon 1997; Rutherford 2013.
- 7 The major theoretical contribution is Turner and Turner 1978. Responses include Coleman 2014; Coleman and Eade 2004; Coleman and Elsner 1991; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Jha 1985; Morinis 1992; Sallnow 1981.
- 8 The Turners drew particularly on van Gennep's 1908 work on *rite de passage*, see van Gennep 1960. For other ritual-based contributions in part influenced by the Turners, see Smith 1987 and Bell 1992. Recently for pilgrimage and ritual, see Coleman 2013.
- 9 Seminal contributions from the 1980s include Price 1984 and Renfrew 1985. Major contributions of the current century include the many volumes of the *Thesaurus Cultus Rituum Antiquorum*, see Kyriakidis 2007 and Lambrinoudakis and Balty 2004–2011.
- 10 Specimens of such resistance (i.e. no mention whatever of visual and material culture) might include: Bell 1992; 1997; Boyer 1994: 185–223; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; Kreinath *et al.* 2006; 2007; Rappaport 1999; Whitehouse 2000; 2004, as well as all but one special number (vol. 6 no. 1, 1992) of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*. See the complaints of Elsner 2012, 2–4. It may be added that the Turners themselves are an exception to this, their book of 1978 being broadly open to material issues.
- 11 Graham-Campbell 1994. The essays in this volume are excellent but the volume as a whole is vitiated by the absence of any framing introduction on the theme. See also Bangert 2010 (this is not a theoretical piece).
- 12 Luginbühl 2015.
- 13 For example Arafat 1996, 10–11; Graf 2002, 195; Scheid 2000, 23, n. 18. Note there is no entry for pilgrimage in the index of the *New Cambridge History of the Religions of the Ancient World*: Salzman and Sweeney 2013.
- 14 For sacred mobility in the Mediterranean see Horden and Purcell 2000, 403–460.
- 15 Luginbühl 2015, 54 with this formulation repeated three times.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 54.
- 17 See Elsner 2012, esp. 6–9.
- 18 In art history, as opposed to archaeology, this was the reason that Erwin Panofsky created his theoretical model of 'Iconology', as a means of constraining through textually attested historicism the willful subjectivities of modern interpretation. See Elsner and Lorenz 2012 for a discussion of the theoretical issues at stake.
- 19 In this volume, this issue remains a fundamental methodological problem for the chapter by Joy McCorriston: How far, we may ask, are assumptions that sites like Neolithic Göbekli Tepe were actually connected to pilgrimage, more than merely hope or scholarly assumption?
- 20 Luginbühl 2015, 55.
- 21 For instance Coleman and Elsner 1995.
- 22 For discussion of these issues in the context of the history of religions in Late Antiquity (but not specifically pilgrimage), see Smith 1990.
- 23 Coleman and Elsner 1995, 202–206; Eade and Sallnow 1991, 9.
- 24 Travel has come to be important for a number of recent studies of pre-Christian and early Christian religion: see e.g. Dietz 2005; Ellis and Kidner 2004; Harland 2011; Rutherford 2013, 174–191. On imagined journeys and travel accounts, see Frank 2000, 35–101.
- 25 Coleman and Elsner 1995, 206–207; most recently on Fabri and his many texts, see Beebe 2014.

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16 Pilgrimage progress?

Jan N. Bremmer

The appearance of the present book is a welcome addition to the vibrant modern research into pilgrimage.¹ The attention to this subject is relatively new for the ancient world,² but since the early 1990s studies have proliferated. Yet we cannot fail to note that there is no lemma ‘pilgrimage’ in the index of Walter Burkert’s *Greek Religion* (1985) or Robert Parker’s *On Greek Religion* (2011) and neither do we find any reference to Roman pilgrimage in the 2007 *A Companion to Roman Religion*, edited by Jörg Rüpke, which is the closest to a comprehensive modern study of Roman religion that we have. Pilgrimage does make a fleeting appearance in another collection on Roman religion,³ but it seems fair to say that at first glance pilgrimage is not a relevant topic of Greek or Roman religion. Yet despite these absences, we have had a number of studies in the last twenty years that argue that pilgrimage was an important part of ancient religion.

Undoubtedly, the pioneer of the modern studies on pilgrimage in the ancient pagan world is Jaś (in the earlier 1990s still John) Elsner, who initiated this new interest with a fine study of Pausanias. Elsner was fully conscious of the fact that he applied a basically Christian concept to the pagan ancient world. Not that all of his arguments for doing so were immediately convincing. He started off by postulating that Pausanias was a pilgrim because ‘When visiting the cave of Demeter Melaine at Mt. Elaius, Pausanias tells us that “it was mainly to *see* (my italics) this Demeter that I came to Phigalia” (viii.42.11)’. Important here for Elsner is that Pausanias’ viewing ‘was as much about perceiving the (in this case invisible) presence of the holy as it was about looking at art’. Unfortunately, the Greek text of the passage does not mention ‘seeing’ at all, which is not surprising as Pausanias knew very well, as he tells us, that there was nothing to see: the famous statue had long disappeared.⁴ On the other hand, Elsner is much more persuasive when he analyses Pausanias’ visit to Eleusis as a pilgrimage. There can be little doubt that for foreign initiands the journey to Eleusis was a ‘real’ pilgrimage, and as such Eleusis is rightly discussed in this volume by Inge Nielsen. But was this also the case for a native Athenian? This poses a problem to which we will return shortly.

There are two more important aspects of pilgrimage touched upon by Elsner. First, he notices that ‘A religious tourist visiting sacred sites is not simply a tourist: he or she is also a pilgrim’ (8). As a sweeping statement, this can hardly be true. For a start, religious tourists can visit sacred sites of other religions or churches without

therefore being pilgrims. For example, in the summer of 2015 I visited the sacred site in Konya of Mevlana, the founder of the whirling dervishes, which contains a room with a casket containing hairs from the beard of Muhammad. Being a Dutch Reformed tourist I was not suddenly transformed into a Sufi or Moslem pilgrim. But it is clear that especially today the borderlines between the two categories, pilgrims and tourists, have become rather fluid with the rise of non-confessional pilgrimage and spiritual tourism. In fact so much so, that we have a new journal studying the two categories together.⁵ But the same must already have been the case in antiquity. A foreign visitor to Athens for the Eleusinian Mysteries will surely have looked around the city also.

A second aspect stressed by Elsner is that of Pausanias providing a civic identity for his readers. He further elaborates on this element in a subsequent exploration of the pilgrimage theme in a 1995 book co-authored with an anthropologist.⁶ According to Elsner, the celebration of local festivals such as the Athenian Great Panathenaea or the Argive festival of Hera occasioned making journeys 'home', by citizens, colonists and allies abroad. In that way, these journeys defined the membership of a citizen group and thus strengthened local identities. Similarly focused on identities is the 1997 book on Greek pilgrimage by Matthew Dillon that combines under the umbrella term of 'pilgrimage' all kinds of festivals, such as the women's festival of the Thesmophoria, the Mystery cult of Andania, the oracle of Delphi and the Olympic Games. But does that make their visitors into pilgrims? Once again, we will return to this shortly.

With the next important publication on ancient pilgrimage, David Frankfurter's 1998 collection of studies on Coptic pilgrimage, we move into a different part and time of the ancient world. Without any mention of Elsner, but with plenty of references to anthropological pilgrimage studies, Frankfurter seeks in his volume to comprehend pilgrimage 'as an expressive attitude and act in Egyptian history'. It is a '*regional* (his italics) approach to Christianity', but also 'an *example* of pilgrimage in the history of Mediterranean religions' (6). In his lengthy introduction, Frankfurter takes a rather generous view of pilgrimage as comprising even a journey to 'the center of one's city, or down an alley' (18), but he usefully pays attention to the problem of the catchment areas, the relationship between central and peripheral shrines (18–24) and the role of holy men (24–26). In the end, though, his introduction falls short of a proper discussion of Coptic pilgrimage because he is more interested in local cults, especially their supposed continuity with the pagan past, than the phenomenon of pilgrimage itself.⁷

In 2005 Elsner returned to pilgrimage, now in company with Ian Rutherford, in a collection of studies on pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and early Christian antiquity. In their introduction, they present a typology of pilgrimage, in which they distinguish twenty different types of pilgrimage – fourteen Greek, four Roman types, one Jewish and one Christian – ranging from civic delegations to festivals in other cities to the yearly festival of Diana at Lake Nemi to visits to Christian icons. They also approached the problem of conceptualising pilgrimage head-on by prefacing their analysis with a quote by Fritz Graf: 'The label pilgrimage does actual harm'.⁸ This is indeed a very important point, yet they nowhere make clear

what is gained by calling all these very different rituals 'pilgrimage'. To what extent does such a label help to improve our understanding? What progress does their book constitute?

What about the present book? There can be no doubt that the focus of the collection is much better and much more helpful than previous works. By placing material culture in the forefront, the editors provide another example of 'the material turn' in religion, which derived from the so-called 'cultural turn'. This recent development, which has been advanced in particular by scholars such as Birgit Meyer and Carolyn Walker Bynum,⁹ also sharpens our insights into ancient religion, in this case by focusing on the architecture and artefacts of sites connected with pilgrimage. Yet the editors also cannot escape the subject that has bedeviled all previous scholars of pilgrimage: what do we understand by that term?

It seems to me that we have to start with the emic terminology of pilgrimage. In other words, which terms did the Greeks and Romans use for what the various editors call 'pilgrimage'? It is rather surprising that none of the editors and authors of previous volumes have thought this necessary. Yet if we want to understand the terminological problem we cannot do without a *begriffsgeschichtliche* investigation. Such an analysis will enable us to understand the notions used by the Greeks and Romans for rituals nowadays called 'pilgrimage' but will also make us aware of possible differences from our own notion of 'pilgrim'. The space allotted me for this Epilogue does not suffice for such a vast undertaking, but we can make a few observations to help us on our way.

In Greek, two terms in particular have been claimed in connection with pilgrimage. The first one, *theôria*, has no Greek etymology but its general sense is 'observation'. Apparently, the *theôroi*, sacred delegates on behalf of their cities to festivals elsewhere, were primarily spectators rather than participants. Other meanings, such as 'to attend a festival, even in one's own city', easily derive from this prime meaning. Given our observations above on the connection between pilgrimage and tourism it is interesting that in later texts *theôros/theôria* can also mean 'sightseer/sightseeing'.¹⁰ In any case, originally the term also referred to the political sphere, as the sending of the *theôroi* depended on a decision of their city.¹¹ Our second term is rather different and limited to Egypt. A couple of centuries after they had settled in Egypt, the Hellenistic Greeks introduced the term *proskynema*, 'act of adoration', for brief inscriptions left in sanctuaries visited. The term is virtually limited to the Egyptian epigraphic record, occurs rarely in literary texts outside Egypt and is clearly a regional term. It is regularly combined with the term ἦκω or ἦλθον, 'I have come', thus stressing that the goal of the pilgrimage has been reached. Rather strikingly, these inscriptions seldom display signs of piety and when so, only concisely. They do not help us when searching for the motivation of the pilgrimage.¹²

It is different in Latin. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Romans did not have a term for something resembling pilgrimage. As inhabitants of the most powerful city of the ancient world, they clearly had no need to coin a term for visiting sanctuaries in other towns. It is even rather striking how late we find a term equivalent to our 'pilgrim' in Latin. It is well known that the modern term 'pilgrim' derives from Old

French *pelerin*, *peregrine*, ‘pilgrim, crusader, foreigner, stranger’, via Late Latin *pelegrinus*, dissimilated from Latin *peregrinus*. The latter belongs to a semantic field that is also covered by the noun *peregrinatio* and the verb *peregrinor*. When we look at the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v., we find as their main meanings ‘wandering’ and ‘moving about’ (especially outside one’s fatherland, but never travelling to a sanctuary), and ‘to be a stranger’, in a Christian sense also being a stranger in this world. The wandering is not aimed at a specific goal as is the case with modern pilgrims; typically, the famous pilgrimage of Egeria never uses *peregrinor* and related words but often the verb *ire*, ‘to go’, without an indication of a specific direction.¹³ In earlier Medieval Latin we find (in addition to a few examples of our ‘pilgrim’, which do not antedate the ninth century) mainly meanings such as ‘crusade’, ‘military expedition’, ‘to go into exile’, ‘migration of birds’, ‘living away from one’s earthly or heavenly fatherland’, but also ‘journey without fixed goal’ (for spiritual perfecting), ‘mission’, ‘this earthly life’.¹⁴ To be a stranger and wandering do seem to be the core meanings of this group of words.

From this brief survey, I would conclude that neither the Greeks nor Romans, nor even the earlier Christians, had felt the need to create a word that comes even close to the meaning of our modern ‘pilgrim’ or ‘pilgrimage’. But emic meanings are of course only one side of the coin. There is in itself nothing against the introduction of an etic term if that is useful for a better understanding of the ancient evidence. But what does it profit us to call a brief journey to a sanctuary or participation in a yearly festival a ‘pilgrimage’? Nothing, I submit, only misunderstanding. It introduces into our appreciation of the ancient evidence notions such as holy places, wandering, specific religious goals and life-transforming experiences, which are simply absent from many ancient rituals claimed as pilgrimages. It will be clear that I do not favour bringing into our equation nomadic feasts (McCorriston), local Mystery cults such as that of Andania (Nielsen), local women’s festivals such as the Thesmophoria (Friese) or visits to graveyards (Stevens) – let alone Frankfurter’s alley (above). To be a meaningful etic category, pilgrimage should comprise the elements of religious motivation, journey, religious site and life-enriching experience.

This plea for a *stricto* (or perhaps *strictiore*) *sensu* usage of the terms ‘pilgrim’ and ‘pilgrimage’ does not mean that a comparison with Christian usages, as presented in this book, cannot be useful. I would not even mind going further to say that there are clear family resemblances between the Christian practices that have given us our present terminology and Greek, albeit much less Roman, rituals such as, for example, the Mystery cults of Eleusis and, especially, Samothrace.¹⁵ In fact, we know that Cyril of Alexandria founded a new sanctuary in Menouthis in honour of SS Cyrus and John in order to combat the pilgrimage to the neighbouring healing sanctuary of Isis.¹⁶ That is why I would like to conclude with a closer look at two pilgrimages discussed in this book, one Greek, the Mysteries at Samothrace, and one early Christian,¹⁷ the complex of Thecla at Meriamlik. My question will be especially: what does the archaeological approach as advocated in this book contribute and what are its deficits, if any? Does the approach help us towards a more holistic analysis of the pilgrimages so that we can acquire a

better picture of what an ancient pilgrimage entailed? Let us start with the Mystery cult of Samothrace.

Samothrace is an island without natural harbours, and the strong winds from the north and those from its mile-high mountain made approaching the sanctuary and the city of Samothrace, which were both located on the northern side of the island, a rather dangerous business. To be a pilgrim to this island was a real choice, and it is therefore not surprising that the first pilgrims were sailors who visited the Mysteries for their salvation at sea.¹⁸ When the sanctuary had become prestigious, royal figures such as Philip of Macedon and Ptolemaic Arsinoë also chose to be initiated, and in the first century BC the island's connection with the Aeneas myth attracted several famous Romans, such as L. Calpurnius Piso, when proconsul of Macedonia, and the polyglot Varro. Obviously, motivations for the pilgrimage could widely vary, as they still do today. Aside from these famous people, the inscriptions show that the main catchment area of the Mysteries was the coastal cities of Northern Greece and those of Western Asia Minor: the sanctuary's pull was distinctly regional.¹⁹

From the inscriptions we know that men and women, enslaved and free, high and low status, made the perilous journey. They will have often travelled in a group given that initiates regularly came from one city as demonstrated by the inscriptions. This travelling together may well have promoted a certain feeling of *communitas* among the pilgrims as the anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) famously argued.²⁰ Once arrived on the island, the initiands must have moved to the entrance of the sanctuary where, presumably, there was an official beginning of the initiation. Wescoat has rightly argued that the passage from the entrance to the building where the initiation took place must have shaped 'the pilgrims' kinaesthetic experience and visual perceptions, which, in turn, affected their state of mind'. She notes the original passage through a narrow entrance and a steep descent to the central valley. I would further suggest that these features also helped to create a feeling of togetherness and *communitas*, as in these circumstances the initiands would sometimes have been pressed close together before being able to proceed on wider and less steep roads. Moreover, the darkness of the evening and falling night must have made it wise to stay together, not knowing exactly where they were going, since they were following the priests, who held the lamps.

Did they chant hymns or sing praises to the gods while proceeding? There certainly were ecstatic dances and libations, and a certain tension and anticipation had to be built up. Unfortunately, our archaeological evidence largely deserts us at these points and has nothing to tell about the actual initiation. It has not even succeeded in identifying with any certainty the building in which the Mysteries were performed. Here we are thus confronted with the limits of the archaeological approach, perhaps more in pagan than in Christian cases, as in the latter we know a fair amount about the liturgy of the time and region and therefore can more easily fill in gaps in our knowledge regarding the ritual part. This lack of knowledge also prevents us from knowing if those initiands that returned for the second and higher degree of initiation, the *epopteia*, had to follow the same route so well sketched by Wescoat. In any case, the pilgrims will hardly have departed straight

for the harbour as Wescoat suggests. A number of dining rooms have been found, and also the late antique author Nonnos, who was well acquainted with the Mysteries, mentions banqueting. Given that the archaeological evidence has brought to light an altar and one ram's horns – the ram being the favourite sacrificial victim of the Mysteries – it seems plausible that the pilgrims dined on their sacrifices. Moreover, in his *Life of Lucullus* Plutarch mentions that one of Lucullus' naval commanders, Voconius, lingered on Samothrace after his initiation and celebrated a *panegyris*, 'fair', which was a traditional part of ancient Mysteries. Naturally, the booths of such a fair have not survived, but the excavations have produced rings which were given (sold?) to the pilgrims as a permanent souvenir of their initiation. The widespread popularity of later *Pilgerzeichen*, such as the famous shell of Compostela, illustrates that such a souvenir is a popular item in pilgrimage sites. Evidently, many pilgrims wanted to come home with a tangible sign of their initiation, of their closeness to the Samothracian gods. Here again we see the benefits of an archaeological approach.

Let us now move to a rather different site, that of Meriamlik, the pilgrimage site of St Thecla. Thecla emerges first in the Christian tradition around AD 200 in the so-called *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Her name is occasionally mentioned in the subsequent centuries, but her sanctuary at Meriamlik is known archaeologically only from the fifth century. As Kristensen shows, Meriamlik, like Samothrace, was basically a regional complex which mainly attracted people from the neighbouring city of Seleukeia and province of Isauria. Unfortunately, there seems to be no graffiti that can tell us something about the origins of the pilgrims, such as we can observe in the Sinai, whose St Catherine's Monastery is well analysed in this volume by Ann Marie Yasin. She rightly pays attention to the routes to the Monastery, but does not mention the various graffiti that enlighten us, at least to some extent, about the origins of the pilgrims, who even at an early stage came from as far afield as Armenia, although the grand majority spoke Greek.²¹

Although various indications suggest worship of Thecla was already in existence,²² our first proper description of the site is by Egeria in her account of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Kristensen notes the existence of a wall around the Thecla basilica before Egeria's visit and suggests that 'Egeria's reference to this precinct wall firmly establishes it as an early feature of how the sacred space of Thecla's sanctuary was defined'. However, this is only one element of the wall's function, as Egeria suggests that the wall was built 'to guard the church because of the Isauri, as these are very malicious and frequently commit acts of robbery, to prevent them from making an attempt on the monastery which is established there'.²³ This does not exclude its also functioning as a sacred demarcation, but may not have been its main function. In any case, the wall must have been a clearly visible landmark and as such a very welcome sign for the arriving pilgrims.

What did the pilgrims do on arrival? This must have depended on the goal of the individual pilgrimage. Egeria tells us that on her arriving 'prayer was made at the martyrion',²⁴ and the whole of the *Acts of Saint Thecla* having been read'. From her text it is evident that the martyrion was in the church.²⁵ The term 'martyrium' is somewhat odd, as the *Acts* clearly tell us that Thecla had passed away normally,

not died as a martyr. However that may be, apparently the church contained the supposed grave of Thecla. This must have made burial in the church a precious commodity, and the *depositio ad sanctam* was sometimes contested, as Kristensen observes, although archaeology cannot uncover the politics behind burial. In addition to the prayer, Egeria read the *Acts of Thecla*. Did she bring a copy of this apocryphal writing or did the priests in the church have a copy ready for the pious pilgrims? In any case, as Kristensen notes, there must have been a literary production connected to the Thecla complex, as we have a series of miracles of Thecla that must have been written over a longer period of time.²⁶ For Egeria, the place clearly was an important *lieu de mémoire* of Thecla, and one can well imagine the emotion evoked by the reading of the *Acts*. For others, healing was perhaps the main motivation, and, as Kristensen suggests, incubation could have been practised here as well, as it was at the site of St Menas in Abu Mena (Yasin).²⁷ After the more religious part of their journey the leaving pilgrims will have visited the fair, where soap was sold (*Mir.* 42: to be used in the baths also?), but surely also other commodities.²⁸ Some pilgrims will have continued their journey, such as Egeria, others will have gone home straight away. We do not hear from the literary evidence of any souvenirs taken home, but this does not mean there were none.

Undoubtedly, both pilgrimages that I have discussed share a number of similarities, such as the sometimes perilous journey, the choreographed access to the actual shrine and the fair; in this respect the modern pleas for the use of the term ‘pilgrimage’ also for certain ancient ritual practices is fully justified. Moreover, a number of contributions to this book show the real progress in our understanding of the workings of a pilgrimage site, whether for healing in Greece (Frieze) or beyond the Alps (Grünewald),²⁹ for visiting a monastery (Blanke) or a stylite (Yasin, Hunter-Crawley),³⁰ for the importance of votives (Petsalis-Diomidis), for reconstructing a procession (Jürgens) or for detecting a multi-religious pilgrimage site (Drbal),³¹ for reconstructing the catchment areas,³² and for the impact the sites must have had on the arriving pilgrims. Naturally, archaeology is much less equipped to reconstruct the motivations of the pilgrims, the goings on at the *moment suprême* of the Mysteries or the liturgy in churches. In the end, both texts and artefacts are necessary to acquire a full picture of ancient and modern pilgrimages.³³

Notes

- 1 For good, up-to-date introductions to recent work on pilgrimage, see Mondragón *et al.* 2012, 11–26; Buitelaar 2015, 9–25. In my references, I will limit myself mainly to recent literature or studies to be added to the various chapters of this book, to which I refer by the names of the authors.
- 2 From the older literature, note especially Kötting 1950.
- 3 Woolf 2003, 39–54 and 47–48.
- 4 Paus. 8.42.11: Ταύτης μάλιστα ἐγὼ τῆς Δήμητρος ἔνεκα ἐς Φιγαλίαν ἀφικόμην, cf. Elsner 1992, 3–29; 8, 20–21 (quotations): 1995, 235–255. Before Elsner’s essay there are virtually no classical books or articles with ‘pilgrim/pilgrimage’ in the title, except for those focusing on the Holy Land. For a nuanced critique and positive evaluation of Elsner’s ‘pilgrimage’ contributions regarding Pausanias, see Pirenne-Delforge 2008, 98–101.

- 5 In 2013, *The International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* (IJRTP) was founded by the Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Expert Group and is published by the Dublin Institute of Technology (<http://arrow.dit.ie/ijrtp/about.html>). The combination is often studied today. For good introductions, see Post 2013, 135–149; Stausberg 2010.
- 6 Coleman and Elsner 1995, 10–29.
- 7 Frankfurter 1998, 3–48. The numbers in the text of this paragraph refer to this introduction.
- 8 Graf 2002, 193–196.
- 9 Bynum 2011; Meyer 2012.
- 10 Rutherford 2013, 4–6.
- 11 As is noted in a still valuable older study: Siebert 1973, 33–53.
- 12 For the *proskynema* inscriptions, see most recently Dijkstra 2008, 186–192; Tallet 2013, 10.5587–88 (with full bibliography).
- 13 Vermeer 1965, 1–6, 19.
- 14 *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, vol. X. 1 (1995) s.v.; *Novum Glossarium mediae Latinitatis*, vol. Pea-Pezzola (Copenhagen and Geneva, 1995–2000) s.v.; note also Albert 1992; De Gaiffier 1967, 31–61; Olivieri 2013; Plötz 1979, 103–134.
- 15 For the term, see Ginzburg 2004, 537–556.
- 16 Montserrat 1998, 257–279; Stolz 2008, 193–207.
- 17 For early Christian pilgrimage, see the useful introductions by Frank 2008, 826–843; Külzer 2015, 51–64. For early Christian critiques of pilgrimage, see Bitton-Ashkelony 2005.
- 18 Pace Wescoat (her note 13), the early evidence is crystal clear in this respect, cf. Bremmer 2014, 28–29; add Faraone 2005, 30–50. For a more detailed discussion of the Mysteries, I refer to my discussion, *op. cit.* 22–36, where the reader will find all the evidence for details mentioned here.
- 19 Linde 2013, 81–88.
- 20 For a good discussion, see Di Giovine 2011, 247–269.
- 21 Cf. Destephen 2014, 135–156, who also reconstructs the various pilgrim routes through the Sinai.
- 22 For the early worship of Thecla, see now Barrier *et al.* 2016.
- 23 Egeria, *Iter.* 23.4: *Propterea autem murus missus est ad custodiendam ecclesiam propter Isauros, quia satis mali sunt et frequenter latrunculantur, ne forte conentur aliquid facere circa monasterium, quod ibi est deputatum*, tr. M. McClure and C. Feltoe, slightly adapted. For the notorious Isaurian robbers, see Feld 2005.
- 24 For prayer and early Christian pilgrimage, see Maraval 1985, 138.
- 25 Egeria, *Iter.* 23.4: *ecclesiam, in qua est martyrium*, cf. Dagron 1978, 72f.
- 26 Bovon 2016; Dagron 1978.
- 27 Grossmann 2007, 125–140.
- 28 Dagron 1978, 78f.
- 29 For Grand, see also the extensive dossier in *Les Dossiers d'Archéologie* 162 (July/August 1991).
- 30 Note also Sodini 2012, 5–23.
- 31 This is still a normal phenomenon today, cf. Albera 2011, 109–129.
- 32 For an interesting analysis of pilgrimage routes based on the Menas flasks, see Lambert and Pedemonte Demeglio 1994, 205–231; add Escher 2005, 73–85; Martin 2006, 383–393.
- 33 For various references and ideas I am most grateful to Rolf Bremmer, Jitse Dijkstra, Tobias Nicklas and, last but not least, Ton Hilhorst, whose scrutiny of my text helped me to remove various blemishes and misunderstandings.

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Index

- Aachen 131, 136, 137
 Aachen-Burtscheid 136, 137
 ablution 29, 35, 42, 187
 Abraham 247–249, 251, 253
 Abu Mena 8, 167, 173–174, 179, 181,
 190–199, 205–206, 213–214, 218, 227,
 235, 281
 Aedius Tib. Claudius Professus Niger 138
 Aelius Aristides 266
 Aemilius Crescens, L. 136
 Aemilius Placidus 138
agalma 94
agones 41; *see also* games
 Agrai 29
 Akhmim 210
 Alahan 234
 Alauna 133
 Aleppo 197
 Alesia 132
 Alexander 36, 106
 Alexandria 67, 106, 116–117, 119, 173,
 190, 203
 Algeria 8, 179
 Alise ‘La Croix Saint-Charles’ 138
 Almaqah 17
 altar(s) 32, 34, 40–41, 51, 56, 88–89,
 91–92, 94, 96–99, 108–109, 121, 132,
 134, 137–139, 156–158, 166, 193–194,
 213–214, 234, 246, 248, 250, 255–256,
 258, 280
 Amman 172–173
 Amos 251
 Amphiaraios 106–109, 117, 119, 121–122,
 124, 125
 Amphiareion 106–124
ampullae 190–195, 199
 Amritsar 187–190, 193
 Anatolia *see* Asia Minor
 ancestor(s) 15, 152, 154–156, 158,
 160–161
 Andania 6, 7, 28–29, 39–42, 48, 55–59,
 276, 278
 Andernach 142
 Andesina *see* Grand
 angel(s) 166, 199, 203, 209, 248–250, 253
 Annia Faustina 138
 Antalya 171
 Anthony, St. 190; *see also* Antony, St.
 Antioch 3, 166, 196, 232, 237
 Antony, St. 203, 206; *see also* Anthony, St.
 Aphaca 253–255, 257
 Aphrodite of Knidos 111
 Apollo 91, 111, 113, 132, 137–138;
 Belenus 132; Grannus 132; Karneios
 40–41; Moritasgus 132, 138; Pythios
 31; Toutiorix 136; Vindonnus 132
 Appius Claudius Pulcher 33, 173
 Aquae/Baden-Baden 136
 Aquae Helveticae/Baden 136
 Aquae Mattiacorum/Wiesbaden 136
 Aquae Neri/Néris-les-Bains 138
 Aquae Sulis/Bath 136–137
 Aquae Tarbellicae/Dax 138
 Arad 17
 Aramean 18
 arch 169–172, 175, 197
 Archelaos relief 118
 architecture 4, 5, 7, 18, 28, 33, 48, 52, 55,
 57, 69, 72, 88, 94, 96–97, 106–107,
 111–112, 124, 168, 170, 172, 179, 181,
 197–199, 208, 230, 233–235, 265, 277
 Arsinoe III, 107, 116–119, 121
 Artemis Leukophryena 7, 89–99
 Ascalon 3
 Asclepius *see* Asklepios
 Ashmolean Museum 192
 Asia Minor 7, 16, 69, 89, 91, 97, 206, 224,
 227, 231, 256, 279
 Asklepios 45, 49–51, 58, 91, 112–113,
 132, 232, 254

- Assur 20
 Assyrian Empire 11, 19–20
 Astarte 253
 Atargatis 253, 256
 Athanasius 203, 205
 Athena 89–90, 96, 160
 Athenō 160
 Athens 28–31, 33, 34, 48, 107, 172–173, 276; Dipylon gate 31; Eleusinion 30, 33–34, 173; Panatheniac Way 30; Pompeion 31
 Athos, Mt. 67
 Atripe 207
 ‘Attar 17
 Augst 131
 Avenches 131, 138
 Axial Age 11–12, 19–21
- Bad Bertrich 133
 Bagnères-de-Bigorre 133
 Baiae 139–140
 Balyra River 40
 banquet 29, 31, 35–36, 39, 41, 55–58, 158, 280; *see also* feast
 baptism 190, 193, 206, 212–214, 217–218
 Bartholomew 213, 217
 Batav Maddgarisianus 137
 baths 35, 42, 50, 56–57, 130–139, 195, 217, 227, 236, 281
 Bawit 217
 Beersheba 19
 Beire-le-Châtel 133
 Bernkastel-Staadt 131
 Besa 207, 209
 Bethel 18–19
 Blandina Martiola 132
 Bona Dea 139
 Bordeaux 133
 Bordeaux Pilgrim 255
 Borvo 132, 138
 Bosra 170
 Boudina 133
boule 114
bouleuterion 92
 boundaries 28, 70, 152–153, 161, 168, 170, 172, 175, 182, 228–230, 247
 Bourbon-Lancy 133
 Bourbonne-les-Bains 138, 142
 Britannia 137–138
 Bronze Age 11–12, 17–18, 33, 68
 burial 15, 97, 154, 192, 206, 214, 237–239, 247, 281
 Byblos 17, 253
 Byzantine 173, 175–176, 247
- Caesarius 212
 Canaanite 15, 18
 Carrawburgh 138
 Cassia Touta 138
 Castro-Urdiales 139, 141
 Catherine, St., monastery of 175–179, 199, 205, 228, 280
 Chamalière 142
 Chester 136
 Christianity 11, 207, 212, 249, 255, 266, 268, 276
 Cilicia 132, 227, 231–232, 254
 cistern(s) 29, 35, 37, 39, 227–228, 235–236
 Claudiopoli 232
 coin(s) 91, 94, 96, 116, 138, 142, 169–170, 193, 239, 248, 255–256, 277–278
 Cologne 134, 136, 139
 Comedovae 133
communitas 59, 158, 161, 279
 Constantine 133, 246, 248, 253–254, 256–257
 Constantinople 232, 255
 Coptic 190, 207, 208, 213, 276
 Corinth 53, 55–57, 79
 Coventina 132, 138
 Creto 131
 Crispina, St. 179–180
 cult personnel 43, 50, 92
 Cyprus 231–232
 Cyril I 213
 Cyrus and John, SS 205, 278
- Dalisandos 230, 232
 Damascus 18
 Damona 132
 Dan 18
 dancing 31, 33, 35, 53, 79
 David 18
 Deir al-Bala’iza 216
 Deir el-Bahari 245
 Delphi 57, 62, 87, 94, 172, 276
 Demeter 34, 37, 40–41, 48, 52–53, 55, 56; Kabeireia 35–36; and Kore 28–31, 33, 40, 67, 81; Melaine 275
 Demogenes 111
 Demokrite 107, 119–121
demos 114, 119, 122
 Diana Mattiaca 136
 Didyma 91, 111
 Dionysos 31
 Dioskouroi 40
 Divonne-les-Bains 133

- Egeria 227–228, 231–234, 278, 280–281
 Egypt 3, 8, 16, 18, 190, 193, 203, 205–218,
 224, 227, 232, 245–246, 276–277
 Ein Gedi 17
 'Ein-Tzur 255
 Eirenoupolis 232
 Eleusinian mysteries 29–35, 40, 55, 276
 Eleusis 6–7, 29–35, 40, 42, 55, 59, 67,
 80–81, 172–173, 275, 278; Artemis
 Propyleia, temple of 34; Greater
 Propyleia 33; Kallichoron well 31,
 33–35; Lesser Propyleia 33; Megaron
 B 33; North Gate 35; Sacred House 33;
 Sacred Way 33–35; South Gate 33, 35;
 Telesterion 33–34, 81
 embodiment 88, 269–270
 Epaminondas 39
 ephebes 30–31
 Ephesos 50, 89, 91
 Epidauros, sanctuary of Asklepios 48,
 49–52, 55, 57–59; *abaton* 52, 57;
 hestiatorion 51, 57; 'Kotys stoa' 50, 57;
 palestra 51; propylon 49–50; stadium
 51; *thymele* 51
 epigraphy 1, 7; *see also* inscription(s)
 Epiphanius, St. 212, 253
 epiphany 89, 94, 97, 99, 108, 112, 235
 Essarois 132
 Eubiotos 111
 Eusebius 245, 248–249, 251, 253–236
 Eutropia 248–249
 Evagrius Scholasticus 172, 228

 fair *see* market
 fasting 53
 feast 3, 13–21, 37, 50, 53, 67, 114, 152,
 172, 201, 205–206, 208–210, 217, 248,
 279; *see also* banquet
Feralia 158
 festival(s) 7, 20, 29, 30–31, 34, 40–41, 43,
 48–50, 52–53, 55–59, 69, 75, 81, 87–89,
 92, 94, 96, 99, 110, 131, 156, 157–158,
 208, 218, 229–230, 232–233, 236, 255,
 276–278
 food(stuffs) 17, 20, 52, 55–58, 199, 216, 218
 fountain 35, 50, 52, 92
 Fucino reliefs 153

 Galgūla 19, 25
 games 41, 58, 89, 110, 255, 276; *see also*
agones
 gathering 13–21, 70, 74–77, 94
 Gaul 7, 130, 132–133, 136, 138–139
 Gaza 255

 Gela 48, 53–55; Bitalemi sanctuary 54;
 Thesmophorion 48, 55
 gender 4, 6–7, 47–59, 139, 188, 197, 200
 Geometric 33–35
 Gerizim, Mt. 19, 172, 255
 Germania Superior 130, 136
 Germanus 205
 Gerolstein-Pelm 131
 Gezer 17
 Gibraltar 231
 Gilat 17
 Gilgal 19, 251
 Göbekli Tepe 13
 Grand 131, 133–134
 Great Gods 7, 28, 40–41, 67–69, 80
 Great St Bernard 131
 Griselicae 138
 guesthouses 216; *see also* hostels
gynaikonomos 55, 57

 hagiography 203, 209
 Hagne 40
 Haidra (Ammaedara) 179
 Haram Ramet el-Khalil 246–247,
 250–251, 255–257
 Harmandir Sahib 187–190, 194–195, 197,
 199–200
 Hartuv 17
 Hawl 17
 Hazor 17, 18
 healing 7, 48–50, 106, 113–114, 121, 124,
 131–133, 135–136, 138–142, 190, 203,
 205, 213, 217, 227, 233–236, 245, 269,
 278, 281
 heaven 175, 198–199, 203, 209, 251,
 253, 278
 Hebron 19, 246–247, 250
 Heckenmünster 131, 142
 Helena 224, 245, 249
 Hellenistic 7, 19, 36–37, 39, 49–50, 52,
 67–68, 87–90, 94–97, 99, 106–114, 116,
 119, 121–124, 190, 250, 277
 Hercules 172
 Hermes 40–41, 44, 79, 256
 Hermogenes 89
 Hermon, Mt. 255
 Hermopolis 3
 herm(s) 37–38
 Herod 18, 246–247, 250–251
 Herodotus 52, 103
 Herondas 50, 56, 107, 112–113
 Hezekiah 17–19
 Hierapolis 171
 Hilarion, St. 217

- Hochschule 131
 Holmoi 231
 Homer 34, 117
 Homeric Hymn to Demeter 29
 Horace 155
 Hosea 251
 hostel(s) 29, 35, 50–51, 56, 130–131, 136,
 193, 195–196; *see also* guesthouses

 Iakchos 31
iamata 49–50, 52, 56, 59
 Iambe 31
 Ianuaria 133
 Iason 97
 Icauni 132
 iconography 251, 253
 identity 2, 4, 6, 11–12, 17–21, 87–89, 99,
 106, 113, 121–122, 155, 161, 195, 198,
 200, 206, 276
 ideology 12, 19, 236
 Idumaea 250–251, 256
 Ikonion 224, 237
 incubation 57–58, 106, 109, 112, 193,
 235, 281
 initiation 28–30, 32, 34–35, 40–42, 58,
 67–69, 76–77, 79–80, 279–280
 inscription(s) 7, 28–29, 34, 37, 40, 42,
 88–89, 99, 106–107, 110, 113–114, 116,
 119, 121–122, 131–132, 134–136, 138,
 141–142, 153–154, 156, 159, 170, 172,
 205–207, 214, 238, 251, 266, 277, 279;
 see also epigraphy
 intimacy 190–195, 198
 Iron Age 11–12, 17–19
 Isidor of Seville 253
 Isis 136, 253
 Islam 11, 87, 205, 245, 269
 Isthmia 87
 Iulia Tiberina 136

 Jebel Musa 175–178
 Jebel Sufsa 175–177
 Jerash 170
 Jerome 203, 205
 Jerusalem 6, 12, 17–21, 209, 245–246,
 248, 250–251, 254, 257,
 John Cassian 205
 Judaism 11
 Judea 19–20, 217, 250
 Jupiter Poeninus 131

 Kabeiroi 28, 37, 40, 67
kabiriarchai 37
 Kalamos 114

kalligeneia 53
 Kathisma church 245
 Kellia 205, 212
 Kephisos 31
 Khirbet Nimra 247
 Khirbet Sibta 247
 Kidron Valley 18
 Kore *see* Demeter and Kore
 Korykos 237
 Kos 56, 112–113
 Krokos 31

 Lajjun 15–16
 lamps 1, 18, 67, 77, 142, 170, 194, 213,
 248, 256–257, 279
 landscape(s) 3–7, 12, 15, 48, 57, 69,
 74, 107–108, 111, 155, 160, 166, 168,
 170, 175–176, 181–182, 190, 199,
 203, 205, 208, 210, 215–216, 239,
 266, 269
 Late Antiquity 6, 8, 36, 199, 212, 228, 239,
 245–246, 255–257
 Lemnos 28, 67, 81
 Lenus Mars 132
 Léon 136, 138
 Leukippos 94–95, 97
lex sacra 55, 58; *see also* sacred law
 library 209, 236
 lines of sight 177, 194, 200
 Lucian 256, 266
 Lykaion, Mt. 5

 Macarius 248
 Macedonia 3, 279
 Magnesia-on-the-Meander 7, 87–99
 Mainz 136
 Mamre 8, 245–257
 Manutia 138, 145
 Marcus Aurelius 138, 173
 Marinianus, L. Marinius 136
 market 29, 39, 42–43, 56, 58, 90, 194, 235,
 248, 280–281
 martyr 179, 181, 191, 199, 203,
 205–206, 208–209, 213, 217–218,
 224, 238, 281
 martyrism 197, 234, 280
 Martyrius, St. 209, 217
 masseboth 15–16, 18
 Mater Deum 136
 Matrona 132
 Mecca 12
 Mediomatricus 136
 Meduna 132
 Megaloi Theoi *see* Great Gods

- Megara 35
 Megiddo 17
 Melania 205
 Menas, St. 173–174, 190–195, 281
 Menouthis 205, 245, 278
 Meriamlik 8, 206, 224–239, 278, 280
 Mesopotamia 16–18, 20, 256
 Messene 28, 39–41, 55
 Messenia 28, 39–40
 Midamman 15
 Mnasistratos 39, 41
 mobility 2, 7–8, 11, 13, 15, 87–88, 133,
 161, 200, 206, 266, 269–271
 Möhn 131
 monasticism 206, 217
 Moriah, Mt. 18
 mosaic 175–176, 233, 253
 Moses 18, 175–177, 203, 206, 210
 movement 1, 3–5, 7–8, 12, 48, 50, 55, 56,
 58–59, 69–70, 72, 75, 80, 87, 89, 92, 96,
 99, 113, 133, 152, 155, 160, 166, 168,
 176, 178, 181, 187, 189–191, 193, 195,
 197, 199–200, 207, 230, 235–236, 239,
 269–270
 musicians 37, 41, 92
 Mycenaean 29
mystai 29, 31, 33, 35, 55–56
 mysteries 6, 28–43, 55–56, 58, 67, 69, 77,
 276, 278–281

 narrative 18, 20, 69, 79, 98, 175, 189–190,
 196, 237, 265, 269–270
 Neapolis/Nablus 172; *see also* Shechem
 Negev 15, 19
 Nemea 87
 Nemi 276
 Neolithic 6, 12–14, 17
 Nijmegen 136–137
 Ninnion tablet 31–32
 Nitria 205
 Nonnos 280
 Nossis 107, 113
 nymphs 58, 132, 138

 Olba 232
 Old Testament 18, 21, 251
 Olympia 50, 57, 87
 Olynthus 48
 Onnophrius 203
 oracle 94, 109, 276
 Oropos 7, 106–124
 Ostia 132
 Ourania 251, 253–254
 Ovid 152–153, 156–158

 Pais 35–37
 Palestine 217, 248–249, 251, 254–255,
 257, 270
 palimpsest 7, 67, 106–109, 111–113, 119,
 121–122, 124
 Palladius 205
 Pamplona 138
 Pan 37, 58
 Panhellenic 7, 28, 35, 48, 50, 52, 87–88,
 92, 94, 96–97, 99
 Pantenburg 133
 Paphnutius 203
paragogeis 37
Parentalia 156, 158
 Paros 52
parthenoi 40, 55
 passageway 8, 74, 166, 168, 170–171, 173,
 175–176, 178–179, 197, 200, 214
 Passiena Prima 156–157
 Passienus Optatus, L. 156
 patron *see* patronage
 Patron 160
 patronage 20, 91, 94, 205, 208–209,
 227–228, 233, 235, 243
 Paul 203, 224–225, 231, 234, 237, 280
 Paula 205
 Paullus, L. Aemilius 3
 Pausanias 28, 33–34, 36–37, 40, 52, 266,
 275–276
 Peisistratos 33–34
 Pergamon 52–53, 55–57
 Pessinus 67
 Petronius 155
 Peutinger map *see* *Tabula Peutingeriana*
 Phaleron 30
 phenomenology 5, 7–8, 69, 189–190,
 195, 200
 Phormion 119
 Phrynichos 122
 Piacenza Pilgrim 249, 257
 pilgrim(s) 1–8, 13–14, 28, 35, 37, 42,
 49–50, 57–59, 68–72, 74–77, 79–80,
 107–119, 121, 124, 130–133, 136,
 138, 141–142, 168–173, 175–176,
 178, 181, 187–190, 193–200, 203,
 205–210, 214, 216–218, 227–228,
 230, 232–236, 239, 245–246, 249,
 253, 255, 257, 269–270, 275–281
 pilgrimage, attributes of 2–3, 160–161;
 studies 4, 265–266, 276 ; Western
 Semitic 11, 13–14, 16, 21
pinakes 110–112
 Piraeus 49
 Plutarch 31, 280

- Pocking 139
polis 5, 47, 52, 57, 89, 92, 94, 97, 116
pomerium 152–153
pompa funebris 154
pompe 69, 87, 92, 94, 96–97, 99, 153
 Pompeii 153
 Porcia Rufiniana 136
 Portus 159
 Posidippus 107, 113, 118
 pottery 55, 113, 233
 Pre-Pottery Neolithic A 13
 prestige 20, 88
 priest(s) 30–31, 37, 41, 43, 58, 92, 110–112,
 119, 122, 153, 160, 279, 281
 priestess(es) 30–31, 41, 92, 160
 procession 7, 28–33, 36–42, 49–50, 52,
 55–56, 58–60, 74–76, 82, 84, 88–89,
 92–99, 154, 158, 160, 170, 172–173,
 181, 194, 197, 205, 210, 212, 214–216,
 236, 266, 281
proskynema 277
protomystai 42, 55, 58
proxenoi 119
 Ptolemy IV Philopator 107, 116–119
 Puteoli 139–140
 Pyrenees 139–140
- Qal'at Sem'an 8, 166–167, 169–173,
 179, 181–182, 190, 196–200, 206, 214,
 227–228
 Qos 250–256
- Raetia 132
 Rajajjil 15
 Ravenna 253
 Red Monastery 207
 relic(s) 166, 192, 194, 197–198, 205,
 212–214, 217, 224, 231, 233–234,
 256, 265
 Rheitoi 31
 Rhine 135–136
 ritual drama 58, 67, 77
 ritual enactment 111
 road network 135, 231
 Rome 8, 67, 152–161, 172, 253; Capitoline
 172; Esquiline Gate 154; Servian
 wall 154; Via Triumphalis 156; Villa
 Borghese 155
 Rusafa-Sergiopolis 245
 Ruteni 138
- sacred economy 230–233, 235–239
 sacred law 7, 28, 40, 50, 56–58; *see also*
 lex sacra
- sacred space 8, 37, 70, 80
 sacrificial animals 13, 37–38, 41, 55, 75,
 87–92, 142, 193
 saint, veneration and cult of 166,
 181, 192, 203, 205–206, 208–209,
 213–218, 230
 Saint-Honoré-les-Bains 133
 Salona 238
 Salus 132, 139, 141
 Samaria 250
 Samaritan 19
 Samothrace, sanctuary of the Great Gods
 7, 29, 35, 55–56, 67–80, 111, 278–280;
 Dedication of Philip III and Alexander
 IV, 68, 70, 72, 74, 78; Hall of Choral
 Dancers 68, 77, 79; Hieron 68, 77, 79;
 Rotunda of Arsinoe 68, 72, 76, 78, 80;
 Sacred Way 70–80; Theatral Circle 68,
 70, 76–80
 sanctuaries, extra-urban 48, 55–58
 Sanxay 130–131
 Sarah 251
 Saturnilos 239
 Sayyin 17
 Sceaux-du-Gâtinais 131, 133
 Scetis 205
 Seine 132, 142
 Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos 224–225,
 230–232, 235, 237, 280
 Seneca 131
 sensory experience 189–190, 192, 195,
 197, 200
 Sentius 154
 Sequana 132, 142
 Sergius, St. 245
 Servius 131
 Shechem 19, 172
 Shenoute, St. 8, 199, 203–218
 Simeon, St. monastery of (Aswan) 212,
 216–218
 Simon the Zealot 213
 Sinai 8, 19, 166–167, 175–182, 199, 280
 Sirona 132
 Socrates Scholasticus 245, 248–249, 254
 Solomon 18
 Sozomen 245, 248–249, 254–256
 stairways 88, 172, 234
 statue(s) 3, 5, 18, 20, 31, 35, 40, 52, 71,
 74–76, 88, 90–91, 106–108, 112–113,
 116–117, 119–123, 256–257, 265, 275
stephanephoros 92
 Strasbourg 136
 Symeon the Stylite, St. 166, 168–170,
 196–199

- Tabula Peutingeriana* 133, 142
 Tacitus 136
 Tarsus 231–232
 Tebessa 8, 167, 179–182
 Teisikrates 122
 Telanissos 167–170
temenos 32, 35, 36, 48–53, 56–59, 69–70, 72, 74–79, 81, 89–91, 96–98, 227–229, 234–235
 “temple-city complex” 231
 tent(s) 29, 42, 50, 52–53, 56–57, 131
 theatre 37, 39, 41, 50–51, 58, 67, 69, 79, 107, 109–113, 130–131, 133, 136
 Thebes, Kabeiros, sanctuary of 6, 28, 35–39, 42, 67, 81
 Thekla 8, 206, 224–225, 227–231, 233–239, 278, 280
 Theodore 166, 199
 Theodoros 119, 121
theoria 1, 49, 69, 87–88
theoroi 87, 89
 Thesmophoria 48, 52–55, 139, 276, 278
 Tomis 67
 Trevirus 136
 Triptolemos 33
 Troy 67
 Tulaylat Ghassul 17
 ‘Uzza 19
 Valkenburg 133
 Venus 253
 Vercana 132
 Vestal Virgin 158
 Via Appia 155, 159
 Via Latina 159, 253
 Vichy 133, 142
 Virgin Mary 210, 212–213, 253
 virtuality 106–107, 112–114, 121, 124
 Vitrasius Pollio, T. 138
 votive(s) 5, 7, 48, 53, 58, 69, 79, 88, 106–107, 109, 112–114, 116, 121–122, 124, 132, 138–139, 141–142, 166, 198, 239, 255–256, 281
 Wadi Natrun 206
 Wederath 131
 Western Thebes 205
 White Monastery 8, 199, 206–218
 Windisch 136
 Wollseifen 137
 World Systems Theory 11–12
 Xanten 134, 136–137
 Xenophon 47, 59, 97
xoanon 91, 94
 YHW 17–21
 Yusab I 205
 Yverdon-les-Bains 138
 Zeno 196, 227–228, 236
 Zenon of Myndos 97
 Zeus 91–92, 94, 96, 108, 172
 Zeus Sosipolis 89
 Zion, Mt. 18
 Zonaras 254
 Zosimus 132